United Nations A/54/PV.78

General Assembly

Fifty-fourth session

Official Records

78th plenary meeting
Friday, 10 December 1999, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Jusys (Lithuania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

Agenda item 34 *(continued)*

Dialogue among civilizations

Report of the Secretary-General (A/54/546)

Draft resolution (A/54/L.60)

Mr. Widodo (Indonesia): It is indeed a pleasure for me to speak on behalf of the Indonesian delegation on agenda item 34 on "Dialogue among Civilizations". Let me begin by expressing our deepest congratulations to the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its timely initiative on this subject and for the considerable efforts that have been made to begin the dialogue. We believe that it is timely not only because of the significance of a new millennium and the beginning a new era of greater awareness and understanding, but also because of the backdrop of violence which rages throughout the world as we close this chapter of our history. It is also auspicious that we are undertaking our deliberations today, which is Human Rights Day.

Throughout time, mankind has only benefited from increased communication and an improved knowledge of concepts and practices that are initially perceived to be foreign or different. For through that process of inquiry, study and exchange of ideas, real and lasting change has been made and peace has been achieved. We are today uniquely positioned to expand the dialogue to one among civilizations spread across the globe. The information technology that is available and the advances in communication and in travel not only facilitate such a dialogue among civilizations but make it an imperative. Globalization will become a positive and welcome process when peoples and civilizations meet in dialogue and not in conflict.

The end of the cold war shattered the old paradigm of international relations. With the end of the decades-long struggle between East and West, there were some who held that new alliances needed to be formed to protect the gains that had been made and to preserve traditional values and cultural heritages from potential new threats. It was predicted that the East-West contest would be replaced by one between North and South, between privileged and impoverished, with a religious and racial dimension superimposed. A clash among civilizations needed to be averted, and like-minded countries banded together in new alliances.

At a more local level, this could be seen as sheer bigotry and ignorance. At the international level, it is an injustice to humanity and stifles the very progress we all pursue. It closes the door on enlightenment and hobbles any hope of achieving global tolerance and common values. A dialogue among civilizations is essential if we are to achieve our long-sought goals of ending racism and racial discrimination and of advancing human rights

00-27612 (E)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

through cooperation and understanding. I would recall that Iran's promotion of a dialogue among civilizations was based on the premise that the diversity of humankind was a source of strength and not a cause for division. Rather than closing doors and defending against a phantom enemy, the dialogue is inclusive and allows all to contribute to a global culture.

In that regard, in my own country of Indonesia our national motto is *Bhineka Tunggal Ika*, which means "unity in diversity". It is from the hundreds of different ethnic groups that compose the nation of Indonesia that we draw our strength. As our people profess the world's major religions, come from diverse backgrounds with distinct languages and hold dear their varied heritage, we look to a future of prosperity that will be possible only as a consequence of tolerance and respect.

It is from our experience at the national level, and with a sincere recognition of the important need to create such a climate at the international level, that Indonesia supports the notion of a dialogue among civilizations and is therefore a sponsor of draft resolution A/54/L.60.

In the same vein, Indonesia welcomes the substantive activities being undertaken by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and others to promote dialogue and to facilitate an exchange of views among policy makers and within society. My delegation commends the proposal by the OIC to prepare a draft universal declaration of dialogue among civilizations and a 10-year programme of action. Likewise, the proclamation by resolution 52/15 of the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace should complement the goals of the dialogue.

The success of a dialogue among civilizations would validate the principles and goals of the United Nations Charter and would greatly strengthen the deliberations undertaken in this forum. It would enable us to move forward in such areas as human rights, social development and on environmental and numerous other issues. Indonesia therefore strongly supports a dialogue and looks forward to its successful undertaking.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): The creation of the United Nations, following the upheaval of two World Wars, was guided by a spirit of tolerance, concord and solidarity, with the goal of building a world free of hatred and enmity. That altruistic spirit made possible what was then called peaceful coexistence, which is nothing more than a dialogue between two worlds that differ in every way, beginning with their ideology and political systems.

This experience of universal coexistence is a clear example of the symbiosis that can bring together people from all races, languages and cultures.

In its mission to safeguard international peace, the United Nations must therefore make dialogue among civilizations its principal weapon, because only such a dialogue will be able to overcome the numerous conflicts, confrontations and antagonisms among people. It is therefore no surprise that the General Assembly proclaimed the year 2000 the International Year for the Culture of Peace and 2001 the International Year for Dialogue among Civilizations. This is, in fact, a symbolic reminder that peace and dialogue are closely linked and work in unison in the search for a universal civilization.

In assuming the chairmanship of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) group at the United Nations, my country cannot remain silent on the subject of the important Tehran Declaration on the Dialogue among Civilizations, adopted in May 1999, or the resolution on dialogue among contemporary civilizations, which resulted from the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the countries of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Ouagadougou. Furthermore, various speakers have recalled the crucial role played by President Mohammad Khatami of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the current Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, in taking the decision to proclaim the United Nations International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We are convinced that in this area, cooperation between the OIC, the United Nations and other international organizations will ensure the success of this exceptional world event.

That is why my delegation would like most sincerely to commend the Secretary-General for his efforts, and in particular for appointing a Personal Representative to deal with the issue and to work in close cooperation with Governments and certain regional groups in the implementation of the initiative. The provisional report submitted to us in this regard reflects the seriousness of his approach and the determination with which he intends to carry out his mission. That is also why we ask the Assembly to support massively, by consensus, draft resolution A/54/L.60, which is now before it. This enormous enterprise naturally requires all States to participate, because it is a collective endeavour to give

our world a more human face. Governments, organizations, institutions, researchers, politicians, religious leaders and others are all invited to carry out appropriate educational, social and cultural programmes so as to promote dialogue among peoples and civilization.

We are not far from an event that will surely be one of the greatest examples of dialogue between cultures and religions: Bethlehem 2000. As I have already said, celebrating the birth of Christ in the land of Islam is a proof of tolerance and an unprecedented example of brotherhood, for which credit must go to the cooperation between the Palestinian Authority, the Holy See and Italy.

May that concrete action, based on a spirit of friendship, agreement and perfect understanding, inspire and guide the international community so that we can truly make 2001 the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

Mr. Sadasivan (Singapore): First, let me say that I am delivering this statement on behalf of my Ambassador, Mr. Kishore Mahbubani.

We would like to congratulate the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for launching this timely initiative. This year, Singapore has decided to sponsor the draft resolution; we will therefore be speaking in support of it. In our statement today, we will essentially make three points. First, we hope to explain why this is an idea whose time has come. Secondly, we would like to spell out some conditions that have to be met for a successful dialogue. Thirdly, we would like to discuss some of the inevitable difficulties.

For each of these three points, we will also make three sub-points. On the first key point, we believe that this idea is timely for several reasons. First, it is an undeniable reality that we live in world where distances are shrinking; the world has never been smaller. Distant civilizations have become close neighbours. In the past, to use a metaphor, civilizations travelled in different boats and in different oceans. Today, we all share the same boat; now we have fundamental common interests. However, our common interests overlay diverse historical and cultural backgrounds. No boat can survive long if its passengers do not get along with each other. This is one key reason why we need a dialogue among civilizations. Even though we are now physically in one boat, mentally we still belong to different worlds.

Secondly, not only has the world shrunk, but our lives have become intertwined and interdependent. The interdependence in the economic sphere is now well accepted. We need only look at how the Asian financial crisis started in South-East Asia and rippled across the world. But this interdependence also applies to other areas. We now share one global environment, especially in respect of crucial necessities like air and water. Nuclear clouds do not respect borders: neither do diseases. At the same time, on the cultural front, mass communications and telecommunications, as well as the Internet, have created a close interaction between distant cultures on a scale never before seen in human history. That is another reason for dialogue.

The third reason is perhaps the most obvious. For the first time in history, several major civilizations are likely to flourish at the same time. This is a new phenomenon, especially if one looks at the history of the previous two millenniums. When some Asian societies were flourishing 1,000 years ago, European societies were languishing. When European civilizations achieved new heights of creativity in science, technology and culture in the past few centuries, Asian societies were left languishing. In the next few centuries, diverse civilizations will be flourishing at the same time. Samuel Huntington feels that this could lead to a clash of civilizations. We believe that that could be prevented with a dialogue among civilizations.

Our second key point is that for any such dialogue to succeed, we have to meet certain conditions. The first condition is that there should be a tolerance of diversity. In learned minds, this seems like the repetition of a cliché. But if we turn on our CNN and BBC World Service television programmes every day and observe daily scenes of conflict created by differences of race, language, religion and culture, we can see that achieving tolerance of diversity will not be easy.

In a small way, Singapore has tried to promote tolerance by encouraging respect for all religions and cultures. With a small population of three million, we have four official languages. At State ceremonies to which religious representatives are invited, we have several representatives. We believe that respect for multiracialism is an essential condition for Singapore's long-term survival. We believe that it is also essential for global survival.

Secondly, there should be tolerance of change. For most of history, most of mankind has lived in certain set patterns. Most of us grew up in monocultural universes where the traditions of children were similar to the

traditions of their grandparents. The clock of history has now gone into fast forward. Our children will never experience the environment of our grandparents. They will have to learn to adapt their traditions and cultures to meet new global trends and norms. The General Assembly, for example, regularly comes out with new norms concerning the treatment of children, women and minorities. All these new norms will have to be meshed with old norms. This requires tolerance of change.

Thirdly, we will need tolerance of learning. The very concept of tolerance of learning may seem bizarre. Some may say that surely learning requires tolerance and not the other way around. But this statement is not made in the abstract. It reflects the realities of today. In the past few centuries, the most successful societies have been found in two corners of the globe, North America and Western Europe. They have generously shared their advances in civilization and their learning with the rest of the world. But in doing so, they have also come to believe that global learning is a one-way street. They teach and the rest of the world learns. As other societies and civilizations flourish, learning will have to become a two-way street. All societies may have something to learn from one another. For example, the developed societies have done well by developing a language of rights. Several developing societies have survived centuries by emphasizing the language of responsibilities. Developed and developing societies can learn from one another by balancing the language of rights with the language of responsibilities. This requires tolerance of learning.

On that third key point, we believe that dialogue is never easy, even between individuals. Inevitably, there will be difficulties. In the field of dialogue among civilizations, we see at least three difficulties: conceptual, representational and political.

First, on the conceptual front, the first question that needs to be asked is: Where does one civilization end and the other begin? The history of mankind teaches us that civilizations are not clean entities, like billiard balls. Most civilizations have become intermeshed with one another in one way or another. Clearly, it will be difficult to disentangle one civilization from another. But we also know from our common life experience that there are different cultural universes. The habits of life and respect for traditions vary enormously around the globe. We can see different civilizations even if we have difficulty defining their borders clearly. Some of the conceptual difficulties have also been mentioned in the annex to the Secretary-General's report.

The second problem will be representational. Civilizations, unlike nation-States, have no organized structures. It was relatively easy for the world to create a League of Nations or a United Nations. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to create a "League of Civilizations" or a "United Civilizations". Selecting or electing representatives of civilizations for this dialogue will be a delicate and difficult task.

The third difficulty will be political. Dialogue occurs best in a meeting among equals. But civilizations, like every other form of social organization, have never been equal. There are disparities of power. To overcome these disparities, the powerful will have to learn to speak humbly and the humble will have to learn to speak confidently.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that we welcome this initiative, despite the difficulties we have raised. We are pleased that the Secretary-General has come out with a timely and useful report. We congratulate him on the appointment of Mr. Giandomenico Picco as his Personal Representative for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. My delegation looks forward to working closely with Mr. Picco.

Mr. Belfort (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): I am pleased to address the Assembly on behalf of the Haitian delegation to express my country's support for draft resolution A/54/L.60 on dialogue among civilizations. That topic is of the greatest interest to my country at the highest level, especially since Port-au-Prince, Haiti, was the site from 3 to 5 December 1999 of the eleventh Regional Forum of Ministers of Culture and Officers in charge of Cultural Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean, which concluded with a declaration recognizing that culture is the basis for interaction among groups of human beings with a view to changing the world.

The item "Dialogue among civilizations" is most timely, since for some time the idea of a clash of civilizations has been a source of growing anxiety among people. In that connection, the Haitian delegation is grateful to those who have worked to make dialogue among civilizations a major concern on the United Nations agenda. This is reflected in the round-tables organized to provide essential information for creating the framework of norms that will make it possible to understand not only what makes us different from one another but what connects us.

We cannot speak constructively of dialogue among civilizations without mentioning globalization, which, like it or not, continues deeply to transform the structures of international society in the direction of uniformity. In the post-cold-war world, the economic, technological and military supremacy of one side tends to be reflected in an increasing trend towards unilateralism, which gives rise to self-absorbed, intolerant and sometimes even violent reactions. This cannot fail to be of concern, and it is entirely legitimate for us to do all we can to ensure that globalization respects the diversity of human societies. It is important therefore to humanize this process by ensuring that it is neither sanctified nor demonized and that innovation serves diversity and not standardization, integration and not exclusion. The most important thing is to protect the human identity that is our greatest treasure.

Apart from the concerns it arouses, one of the positive elements of globalization, as stressed by Professor Richard Falk at the second round-table on dialogue among civilizations, lies in the understanding that the world is made up not only of sovereign States but also of normative communities with ancient traditions. Through tricks of history, globalization can lead to an ever more complex interaction among tradition, modernity and post-modernity. That is how we should certainly view this dialogue among civilizations, especially since we know that beyond making things more uniform and global, the triumph of globalization means an end to these "great narratives" that destroy differences, and it also means the possible emergence of true, constructive cultural pluralism fueled by dialogue among civilizations.

The Haitian delegation has taken note of the report of the Secretary-General (A/54/546), and thanks Mr. Kofi Annan and his Personal Representative for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, for the clarity of the information and the aptness of the views contained in that document. We note with interest the comment that

> "It seems appropriate ... to speak, within the United Nations context, of two sets of civilizations: those that perceive diversity as a threat and those that perceive diversity as an integral component of growth. The dialogue should be between these two civilizations or set of civilizations". (*A/54/546, para. 4*)

That approach goes to the heart of the problems of our time. In our quest for modernity, should we lose all diversity that runs counter to the process of globalization, or should we integrate and give prominence to that diversity, in a spirit of post-modern acceptance, with a view to protecting the diversity that is at the very heart of the identity of human societies?

The Haitian delegation has also noted how well the report in document A/54/546 highlights the actions taken by our Organization to achieve the culture of peace and tolerance that we all desire. Without any doubt, one must believe that dialogue among civilizations will contribute fundamentally to the achievement of this goal by creating an arena in which we can attack the deep-rooted causes of conflict. The Haitian delegation has also noted the reservations expressed in that report on the validity of the United Nations framework for finding answers to certain conceptual questions. It must be pointed out, however, that there is no more appropriate framework than this, our common home, for finding essential responses to these questions, and on this subject we recommend greater interaction and permanent dialogue between the representatives of the various civilizational groups represented here. Buttressed, then, by our conviction that the Secretary-General and his Personal Representative will be able to find the ways and means to effectively implement the programme set out in document A/54/546, the Haitian delegation renews its support for draft resolution A/54/L.60, on dialogue among civilizations. We invite the Assembly to adopt it unanimously.

Mr. Lancry (Israel) (*spoke in French*): Israel will join the consensus on the draft resolution on the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. I take this opportunity on behalf of my Government to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation for the report of Mr. Giandomenico Picco, Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

Through its pilgrimages from nation to nation and its trials in many times and places, which have forged its history and civilization, the people of Israel have developed a pluralistic, fertile and enriching relationship with the various cultures of mankind. The confluence of the biblical message and its three major monotheistic branches — Judaism, Christianity and Islam — forms one of the most important, common bodies of universal culture. The ancient Persia of Cyrus and Darius, the ancient Egypt of Pharaoh and Joseph, Greek and Latin wisdom and philosophy and the Judeo-Muslim golden age in medieval Spain provided for the people of Israel intellectual horizons and a forum for dialogue in respect for diversity and the harmony of convergence.

The notion of dialogue, perceived in its current and rather narrow sense as a discussion between two, should be revised in the present circumstances at its etymological root to mean a discussion among several, as a tendency and aspiration towards *logos*, that logic leading to a synthesis that reconciles differences and reflects the values of harmony and tolerance.

In our region, the children of Abraham — Muslims, Christians and Jews — all contribute to the establishment of peace and reconciliation. Dialogue between the partners for peace, however, is still limited essentially to political issues. It is therefore both necessary and urgent to give this political grammar, often harsh and frustrating, an intercultural and intercivilizational basis in order to establish a new space in which diversity and unity will weave together the strata of human coexistence in justice, tolerance, solidarity and mutual respect.

We share fully and deeply the belief that dialogue among civilizations represents a fundamental element and a driving force in understanding among people and the firm establishment of peace and reconciliation. Israel is aiming towards this supreme objective in its work for peace. For my country, it is a matter of extending political peace into a regional reality that fully embraces all the peoples concerned in a symbiosis of the cultural, the spiritual, the political and the economic spheres. The Jewish people, both in its ancestral heritage and in its modern reincarnation, the State of Israel, is entirely open to this dialogue among civilizations and is committed to contribute to it in the firm hope that the family of nations will unreservedly and unequivocally join in.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Our debate on the dialogue among civilizations is taking place on the eve of a new millennium. When we speak of civilizations, we must speak of the various cultures that are the primary source that enriches civilizations. Culture, in one of its principal definitions, is the intellectual, behavioral, creative and scientific activity of man everywhere in the world. In other words, it is the largest star of a major galaxy around which all smaller stars revolve. Moreover, culture is the source of civilization, and civilization is the source of science. In our times, science is an embodiment of revolutionary discoveries in the fields of technology, electronics, informatics, communications, etc. — discoveries that have turned our planet into a small village.

Dialogue among civilizations and cultures is of exceptional importance because it opens the door wide for all countries of the world to exchange ideas, thus helping them improve and advance.

In the context of the dialogue among civilizations, we must mention the fact that the Arab world — and particularly my country, Syria — was the cradle of ancient civilizations and of the three divine religions. The peoples of ancient Syria played an important role by laying the original foundations on which many succeeding civilizations were built. In this connection, Hafez Al-Assad, President of the Syrian Arab Republic, said that the original, human civilizations arose, developed and flourished along the banks of major rivers, especially the Euphrates, which was the cradle of many great civilizations that witnessed the first steps taken by humanity in many fields — such as mining, the utilization of machines, transportation and writing. The outcome of the interaction of such civilizations and of their contact with the other civilization in the Nile basin was truly grand and helped other peoples bear the torch of civilization. The results of this interaction spread to other civilizations. On the banks of the Euphrates and the Nile people left important marks on human civilization, and their intellectual and material efforts have inspired the development and prosperity of later civilizations.

On this basis, we can say that ancient Syrian civilizations have given others the first elements of their civilizations in areas such as agriculture, manufacturing, engineering, science, architecture, the arts, law, literature and beliefs. King Hammurabi of Amoriya established the most advanced code of laws of ancient times. This code took a precise and comprehensive legal approach to social issues in all areas of life. King Hammurabi collected all the laws in effect in eastern Syria and improved them. He ordered that they be engraved on diorite stone tablets, which were then placed in town centres. He also developed laws to ensure that justice would reign like the sun over the world and would help defeat evil and darkness, so that the powerful would not oppress the weak.

Aristotle paid tribute to the laws of Carthage, laws that the people of Syria took up and improved on. Aristotle considered these the most precise and best-defined laws. They were recorded with precision in the Aramaic language, which then became the everyday language of all the citizens of Syria for the next 15 centuries.

Cuneiform writing was invented at the beginning of history. It was a complete writing system that gave

evidence of the long and continuous progress of human civilization. It also showed how societies in this region had made tremendous progress towards becoming greater and more modern civilizations.

Theodore the Sicilian asserted that the Syrians had discovered the alphabet, which was then taken up by the peoples of Canaan, who brought it to the Greeks. Sabatino Moscati asserted that the Phoenicians created the letters of the alphabet, and that one of the major achievements of the Phoenicians — perhaps the greatest of all their achievements — was the dissemination of the alphabet throughout the countries of the Mediterranean basin. The invention of the alphabet in the fifteenth century B.C. occurred in the Syrian town of Ugarit, and this was also where the alphabet was simplified from 30 to 22 letters. This civilizational invention radiated from Syria to all nations of the Mediterranean basin.

Moreover, the ancient Egyptians left mples, palaces and a great deal of art that fills us with awe and amazement at the region's ancient architectural grandeur. Visiting the ruins, we are impressed by the beauty and accuracy of the sculptures and the importance of the tablets those peoples left to us.

The Aramaic language of ancient Syria was the language of Jesus Christ. Aramaic and all the other ancient Semitic languages continued to develop until Arabic, the language of the Holy Koran, appeared, and it continues to be used by millions upon millions of people throughout the world.

These are only some of many examples that could be cited regarding the role played by Arab and Islamic civilizations. The examples show how these various civilizations interacted and how they continued to prosper. These are real, historical facts on whose foundation the dialogue among civilizations must be established.

Civilization is part and parcel of humanity's cultural heritage and serves as a bulwark against all forms of ignorance, backwardness and oppression. New civilizations cannot remain silent in the face of the disasters of famine, poverty and displacement. Nor can they remain silent in the face of aggression, occupation, oppression or injustice, nor in the face of the exploitation of the wealth of peoples — especially since these scourges pose a major danger to the international community, threatening to destabilize international relations at a time when the world needs cooperation and solidarity so as to bridge the ever-widening gap between the wealthy and powerful societies and those of the poor, developing countries.

The Meeting of Ministers of Culture of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries was held in the city of Medellín, Colombia, on 4 and 5 September 1997. At that Meeting, the then Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Ms. María Emma Mejía, stated that the cultural identity of each State is an invaluable heritage that we must preserve for future generations and for humanity as a whole, just as it was preserved for us by our ancestors. This preservation work needs to be done in order to ensure that these cultures can be enjoyed by all and be of service to all.

In this connection, allow me to note that the Meeting of Ministers of Culture of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries adopted the Medellín Declaration for Cultural Diversity and Tolerance. The Meeting also adopted the Plan of Action on Cultural Cooperation, which asserted that cultural diversity is a source of strength for humanity and contributes to the establishment of a new world order. The wealth of this cultural diversity must be viewed as an opportunity for cooperation and solidarity rather than as a source of conflict.

The Meeting also condemned all attempts to diminish the value of the cultural heritage of peoples under occupation, and it stressed the need to respect cultural values, traditions and customs, as well as to protect the architectural, religious and historical sites of such peoples.

The Conference also emphasized the responsibility of States to ensure and permit the exercise of the right to culture in accordance with article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The ministers emphasized the need to protect and safeguard the cultural diversity of mankind in all its manifestations so that this heritage would enrich future generations.

Some may claim that the clash of civilizations is inevitable, as certain writers and intellectuals have stated. Let me affirm here that the Arab/Islamic civilization is founded on tolerance, cooperation and mutual understanding among civilizations and on the basis of indigenous religions. It is also founded on constructive dialogue between these religions and other ideologies throughout the world. We believe that such dialogue, which today encompasses the entire world, can help to

refute the false theories and unfair judgements of one civilization against another.

In this connection, the Foreign Minister of the United Kingdom, Mr. Robin Cook stated that

> "some claim that the clash of civilizations is inevitable. I say, however, that this is a serious mistake. We do not want anyone to oppose Islam, which can be a true friend. We may have different religions and cultures, but that does not mean that we cannot all coexist, achieve mutual understanding, learn from one another or enjoy mutual trust so that every civilization may all contribute to others without losing its individual identity."

If dialogue among civilizations is to be strong and solid, effective and balanced, it must be founded on the following principles. First, it must adhere to the principles of justice, fairness and peace founded on justice, as well as to the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter.

Second, we need to promote international cooperation in order to enhance globally shared values, to eliminate international threats and to seek common denominators among the various civilizations and within each civilization for addressing the joint universal challenges we face.

Third, since the dignity and equality of all men must be upheld, we must spare no effort in overcoming the problem of cultural and civilizational hegemony and in discouraging international theories and practices that tend to exacerbate the clash of civilizations.

Fourth, Governments and relevant institutions must play a central role in promoting and facilitating dialogue among civilizations and its methods.

Fifth, international organizations, the United Nations system in particular, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and regional organizations must all play a key role, since they constitute an appropriate framework for promoting dialogue among civilizations.

Sixth, educational institutions and universities throughout the world must promote the definition, effects and importance of dialogue among civilizations.

Seventh, a key element of dialogue among civilizations is the use of principles contained in the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, adopted under General Assembly resolution 53/243 of 13 September 1999. These principles include the promotion of the peaceful settlement of disputes; mutual respect; cooperation; international understanding; full implementation of international commitments under the United Nations Charter and international law; seeking effective solutions to the external debt of developing countries; and the elimination of all barriers hindering the exercise of peoples' right to self-determination, particularly those peoples who still labour under the yoke of colonialism or other forms of foreign domination. All resolutions confirm the struggle of such peoples as internationally legitimate and legal. It is also necessary to help refugees and displaced persons to return to their homeland and to reaffirm the principle of the illegitimacy of the annexation of land by force or war, and the need to condemn and eliminate occupation, which is unacceptable in a culture of peace.

In the light of all this, my delegation supports draft resolution A/54/L.60 under consideration by the General Assembly and hopes that it will be adopted by consensus.

Culture and civilization are strengthened by politics, which is in turn enhanced by culture. We believe that such a political factor requires the implementation of the United Nations Charter, which is the international constitution of our international family and the very foundation of dialogue among civilizations through which justice and the freedom, equality, security and stability of peoples can be achieved. A failure to implement the Charter will cause the gap to widen between industrialized and developing countries. The dialogue among civilizations means mutual acceptance and recognition of the contributions of every civilization to the building of world civilization and of its immense creative potential to provide mankind as a whole with a life in dignity. This will help us to work together, despite our diverse cultures and societies, to build a world society in which all States and individuals can enjoy a life of dignity and practise the values of justice and peace.

The Acting President: In accordance with the decision taken at the 77th plenary meeting, I now call on the observer of Switzerland.

Mr. Maurer (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland is particularly attentive to the theme of the dialogue among civilizations. For 10 centuries now it has

practised within its territory the peaceful coexistence of four linguistic cultures and two major Christian religions. It has also long been a country of immigration, with currently more than a 20 per cent foreign population residing on its soil, in addition to hundreds of thousands of immigrants who have been naturalized over time. As a multicultural country, Switzerland has experienced the reality that dialogue among people of different cultural identities is not only necessary and possible, but infinitely enriching. My country has also learned that peaceful coexistence is never a given, but requires constant effort. The Swiss could not imagine their country without all the other cultures that make up and enrich it.

I am convinced that things are no different for the planet as a whole, which is involved in a process of integration at an ever-growing speed and is becoming what is called a global village. This village requires a common basis of ethics that can guide the conduct of its inhabitants above and beyond the legal rights of people. Switzerland believes that the dialogue among civilizations is one of the best means to seek this common basis that rests on global consensus.

Switzerland is pleased, therefore, by the steps taken by the Secretary-General to prepare for and facilitate this dialogue, and we especially welcome the appointment of Mr. Giandomenico Picco as Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, and we will do our utmost to support his efforts. The Swiss Government has decided to finance part of the infrastructure that will be required by the Personal Representative and to make a payment of $150,000 in this connection.

We are also in the process of thinking, in the context of the provisional report of the Secretary-General, about specific projects that can be part of the Year of Dialogue. I am thinking particularly about the multilateral framework offered by the United Nations system, but also of bilateral dialogues with certain interested countries, and finally, about dialogue at the domestic level, where it has a rightful place, particularly in the framework of the harmonious integration of people of other cultures.

The concept outlined in the report of the Secretary-General's Personal Representative (A/54/546, annex) seems to be aimed in the right direction. We particularly agree with the report's view that the dialogue among civilizations does not start from zero, but that it can benefit from various elements of the existing United Nations framework, including its principles of tolerance and the culture of peace. The idea of creating an organic link between the year 2000, International Year for the Culture of Peace, and the year 2001, Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, is excellent. I note with satisfaction the pragmatism and concrete spirit of the provisional report. The Personal Representative of the Secretary-General has striven to give meaning to existing events and people that symbolize dialogue.

Specific projects that bring people together are more promising than great abstract debates. States will have to provide the framework necessary for dialogue and allow as large a place as possible to representatives of civil society. I am thinking first and foremost about the young generations, but also about those who represent culture, science and universities. Good coordination with other initiatives along the same lines, particularly within the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, will also be valuable. The United Nations will have to coordinate activities, and I hope it will also serve as a catalyst.

We note with concern a common trait of conflicts arising in recent years: the perception of diversity as a threat, as stated in the report of the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General. On the basis of its own experience, Switzerland stands with conviction alongside those who consider difference as a key element of progress, rather than a threat. The provisional report rightly emphasizes that acceptance of diversity is a basic tenet of the United Nations. It also shows a close link between fundamental concepts, such as tolerance, human rights, pluralism and the culture of peace. These values are mutually reinforced when practised within and between countries. The commitment of States to these values must be an ongoing effort if we want the clash of civilizations to remain a false prophecy. The Year of Dialogue among Civilizations will make it possible to focus such efforts.

In conclusion, I wish to stress what I consider to be most essential: the Year of Dialogue will attain its objectives only if the very idea of dialogue, as well as the values closely linked to it, can be put into practice to lessen tensions and to prevent or even resolve conflicts. In this connection, Switzerland hopes that this initiative will successfully lead to one or more reconciliation processes in the world. If so, the Year of Dialogue will leave a tangible and concrete mark by contributing to help those — too many, unfortunately — who are victims of conflicts originating in intolerance and lack of understanding.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3369 (XXX) of 10 October 1975, I call on the observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Mr. Lamani (Organization of the Islamic Conference) (*spoke in Arabic*): Dialogue and interaction among civilizations have enabled them to achieve lofty values and moral principles and have provided many opportunities for constructive cooperation to fulfil all humanity's aspirations to peace, progress, security, prosperity and justice. All civilizations throughout history have created extraordinary heritages through these values and moral principles, which have become essential for international action that would replace policies based on force, violence and exploitation.

History shows that the ancient and enlightened Islamic civilization has contributed to the prosperity of mankind in the spiritual, philosophical, scientific, artistic, literary and many other fields. It is a civilization based on faith, but at the same time it has made a constructive contribution to the flourishing of culture, literature and science. This has led to prosperity, which in turn has solidified progress in dignity and has helped establish a common human heritage as a result of interaction between cultures throughout history — between Persian and Greek wisdom and between many other peoples, whether in Africa, in Asia or in Europe. Thus, it has enriched other civilizations that have successively carried the flame of knowledge and human solidarity.

It is hardly surprising that at the last session of the General Assembly a resolution was adopted on the dialogue among civilizations, at the initiative of Mr. Mohammad Khatami, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Chairman of the Eighth Summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), who acted on his belief in the common destiny of mankind and in equality among individuals and peoples throughout the world, whatever their colour, their language, their race or their cultural or religious identity.

At their twenty-sixth meeting, held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, from 28 June to 1 July 1999, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the OIC renewed their States' faith that cultural and civilizational diversity has always been an effective tool for progress and prosperity in seeking a better future for humankind. They also expressed their full respect for the noble principles and values engendered by all human civilizations, which constitute a solid basis for fruitful cooperation among peoples. This could be an example for international behaviour for the next millennium.

Pursuant to the spirit of General Assembly resolution 5322 and an initiative by the Eighth Summit of the OIC, a seminar was held in Tehran from 3 to 5 May 1999 to deal with the topics and methodology for dialogue among Muslims and with other civilizations in order to find ways of common understanding for fruitful cooperation and to determine moral values that should be the foundation for such dialogue. Following that seminar, a Declaration on Dialogue among Civilizations was adopted that made respect for man's dignity, equality, mutual respect, recognition of diversity and tolerance essential elements. It also stated that there was a need to find a common understanding that would guarantee respect for the principles of justice, fairness and peace. The document also reaffirmed areas of dialogue to safeguard human rights, trust, cultural identity and traditional values.

The Ministers for Foreign Affairs adopted this Declaration during their meeting and urged members to cooperate closely with the United Nations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in order to prepare a draft international declaration on dialogue among contemporary civilizations that would enshrine common principles and moral values and that would serve as a point of reference for international conduct in the next millennium. It would also cooperate to prepare a programme of action at the national, regional, and international levels.

While we welcome this trend towards dialogue and cooperation for a better future, we should not forget that interaction among civilizations throughout history has produced both stability and instability. We have not always seen peaceful history; we have had ups and downs, and we think that humanity, throughout its long history, has never been so enormously threatened and endangered as it is today.

Of course, it is true that at no time has any country been shielded from war. Entire peoples have perhaps been slaughtered through genocide — whole parts of the world have been subject to destruction because of civil, colonial or religious wars. But none of these conflicts have been a genuine threat to the survival of humankind. However, today there are still serious threats posed by existing arsenals of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. These weapons could put an end to all forms of life on our planet. On the other hand, in

spite of the unlimited dissemination of and exceptional progress in communications and information technology, better human understanding has not been achieved. This has not allowed us to have more solid bases for coexistence in a climate of peace.

This is why we hope, as we approach a new millennium, that humankind will stop and think about ways to achieve a better future — a prosperous and peaceful one — so that dialogue will be successful and will identify objectives for establishing a basis for a system for peaceful coexistence, one that would guarantee diversity, consistency and complementarity among civilizations. Mr. Azeddine Laraki, Secretary-General of the OIC, created a unit within the OIC secretariat, under the chairmanship of Ambassador Ibrahim Auf, Assistant Secretary-General for Social Affairs, to serve as a liaison for the preparation of the International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

A number of events have taken place since the adoption of last year's resolution in this regard. On 1 October last, we organized an exhibit on Islamic civilization during the current session of the General Assembly and in cooperation with the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York, aimed at fostering a better understanding and knowledge of our civilization.

In this regard, I would like to praise the United Nations Secretary-General for his tireless efforts and also wish to express our satisfaction with his decision to appoint Mr. Giandomenico Picco as his Personal Representative for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. His appointment will effectively help us make progress in the preparation for such dialogue.

In conclusion, I must renew the readiness of the OIC to cooperate fully and closely for the success of all events in connection with this dialogue among civilizations, in order to achieve the noble objectives to which we all aspire.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I call on the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Fadaifard (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to make a correction to the oral revision my delegation proposed this morning.

In the seventh preambular paragraph, please insert "promote culture of peace," before "remove threats to peace". The paragraph will therefore read,

> "Emphasizing the indispensable role of dialogue as a means to reach understanding, promote [a] culture of peace, remove threats to peace and strengthen interaction and exchange among and within civilizations".

While I have the floor, I have the honour to point out for the record that the delegations of Cameroon, Canada, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, El Salvador, Latvia, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, New Zealand, the Syrian Arab Republic, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Yemen have joined as sponsors of draft resolution A/54/L.60.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/54/L.60, entitled "United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations".

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/54/L.60, as orally revised?

Draft resolution A/54/L.60, as orally revised, was adopted (resolution 54/113).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 34?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 20 *(continued)* **and agenda item 50**

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(f) Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan

The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/54/297, A/54/378, A/54/536)

Letter from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly (A/54/626)

Draft resolution (A/54/L.58)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany to introduce draft resolution A/54/L.58.

Mr. Kastrup (Germany): I am pleased to introduce a draft resolution on Afghanistan under items 20 (f) and 50 of the agenda. The text we are introducing today represents a compromise that accommodates the different views of all delegations involved in the consultations. More than 80 countries participated in the negotiations, and I would like to thank them for their contributions and efforts that led to the text that is being presented today. Our intention during the negotiations was to secure consensus on this draft resolution, as we did in previous years. In keeping with this tradition, I trust that the draft resolution will again be adopted without a vote.

More than 80 Member States are sponsors of the draft resolution at the moment. The following countries, which do not appear in document A/54/L.58, have also joined as sponsors of this draft resolution: Argentina, Belarus, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Madagascar, Mali, the Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Samoa, Seychelles, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uruguay. These sponsors send a strong message to the warring Afghan parties and to all States concerned that it is the will of the international community that peace return to Afghanistan.

I would like to express my gratitude to all sponsors and invite other members that have not yet done so to co-sponsor the draft resolution. The list of sponsors will remain open until the draft resolution is before the Assembly for adoption. As the draft resolution still has to pass the Fifth Committee, this will be at the very end of this session of the General Assembly.

The draft resolution I am introducing today covers both political and humanitarian questions. Let me focus on the most important issues.

The situation in Afghanistan has continued to deteriorate in the past 12 months. The level of fighting reached an unprecedented scale at the end of July 1999, when the Taliban launched a ground and air offensive against the United Front. This offensive started only one week after the meeting of the "six plus two" group in Tashkent. It started despite repeated demands by the Security Council to stop the fighting and despite continuing attempts by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan to avert this Taliban offensive. The offensive has aggravated the already grave humanitarian and human rights situation and has led to massive loss of human life, executions, deliberate abuse and arbitrary detention of civilians, refugee flows, harassment, forcible displacement of civilians and extensive destruction of property.

In view of this grave situation, the draft resolution expresses the conviction that there is no military solution to the Afghan conflict. Despite repeated international appeals not to launch military offensives against each other, both Afghan parties continue fighting and still seem to believe, against all evidence to the contrary, that there can be a military solution. We call on the Afghan factions to stop looking for such a solution and to stop concentrating their efforts on the continuation of the war. They should instead focus their energies on the search for peace and on the reconstruction of their country. The draft resolution therefore calls upon all Afghan parties to immediately cease all armed hostilities, to renounce the use of force and to engage without delay or preconditions in a political dialogue under United Nations auspices. This dialogue should be aimed at achieving a lasting political settlement of the conflict by creating a broad-based, multi-ethnic and fully representative government acceptable to the Afghan people.

In accordance with previous resolutions on Afghanistan, the draft resolution that is being introduced reiterates that the main responsibility for a peaceful solution to the conflict lies with the Afghan parties. We welcome the intra-Afghan meetings held in Ashgabat and Tashkent, and we strongly urge all parties to take further confidence-building measures with a view to resuming direct intra-Afghan talks.

Despite the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, foreign military support to the Afghan parties continued through 1999. This military support consisted not only in the supply of arms, ammunition and military equipment, but also included the presence and involvement of foreign military personnel on the ground. The draft resolution condemns the continued foreign military support to the Afghan parties and calls upon all States to take resolute measures to prohibit their military personnel from planning and participating in combat operations in Afghanistan, to immediately withdraw their personnel and

to ensure that the supply of ammunition and other war-making materials is halted.

We note with concern that, following years of negotiations, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General has had to freeze his activities because of the warring parties' insufficient cooperation. We hope that circumstances will quickly change so that he can again intervene.

Germany has always supported the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA). The draft resolution therefore supports the intention of the Secretary-General to redouble the efforts of UNSMA to achieve an immediate and durable ceasefire and the resumption of the dialogue between the Afghan parties.

We also support the intention of the Secretary-General that UNSMA should carefully monitor and encourage the various peace initiatives of non-United Nations actors, notably from the Afghan diaspora, while continuing to cooperate closely with the countries that are willing to help find a peaceful solution to the Afghan conflict, including those not represented in the "six plus two" group.

Germany further supports UNSMA's new Civil Affairs Unit, which will work inside Afghanistan with the primary objective of promoting respect for minimum humanitarian standards and deterring massive and systematic violations of human rights in the future. We hope that the deployment of a first group of civil affairs officers will be completed as soon as possible.

The United Nations cannot solve the Afghanistan conflict without the support of the international community in general and involved neighbouring countries in particular. The end of military support from outside is an essential prerequisite for the solution of the conflict in Afghanistan. The political will of the neighbouring countries to stop military support is essential, as they control all access to the landlocked country of Afghanistan. Therefore this draft resolution calls upon all signatories of the Tashkent Declaration on Fundamental Principles for a Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict in Afghanistan, adopted by the "six plus two" Group on 19 July 1999, to implement the principles contained therein, in particular the agreement of members of the group not to provide military support to any Afghan party and to prevent the use of their territories for such purposes. It is our conviction that if neighbouring countries decided to have peace in Afghanistan, we would be much closer to a solution to the Afghanistan conflict.

The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, unfortunately, has not notably changed during the last 12 months. The country's population continues to live under most deplorable circumstances. We are distressed that the bombing of civilians in Afghanistan continues. We are deeply concerned about the misery and despair caused by the wholesale destruction of houses, agricultural land and crops. The forced displacement of thousands of Afghans to the Shomali plains has created an almost unbearable environment. Men, women and children have to live without shelter or food, far from their homes.

In this context, it is with a certain relief that we learned of the recently established corridor through the front line. It enables United Nations organizations to provide internally displaced persons with the necessary goods. A first convoy passed the front line several days ago — a sign of hope for the innocent victims of a meaningless war. We call upon all fighting parties to ensure unimpeded access to the affected population for the humanitarian personnel of the United Nations and its organizations as well as that of non-governmental organizations.

Germany continues to be deeply concerned about the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan. Notably in areas under the control of the Taliban, gender discrimination is systematically applied. The draft resolution states very clearly that the international community does not accept the exclusion of women and girls from public life. United Nations organizations have stated that there has been some progress concerning the access of women and girls to education and health care. We note this improvement, though it is far from being satisfactory, and we encourage all parties, especially the Taliban, to grant women their internationally guaranteed basic rights.

Another matter of concern is the safety and security of humanitarian personnel in Afghanistan. We strongly condemn the recent acts of violence against United Nations offices and United Nations personnel in various places in the country. We urge all parties to fully cooperate with the United Nations organizations in the field and to ensure their security.

Unfortunately, the laying of landmines has continued over the past year. My country attaches the highest priority to the complete cessation of landmine usage.

The conflict in Afghanistan has international implications, not only for the neighbouring countries but

also for countries far beyond the region. This year Afghanistan has become by far the world's largest illicit producer of opium. Its output amounts to 75 per cent of the opium produced worldwide. Opium cultivation in Afghanistan has increased by 43 per cent over the previous year. This draft therefore strongly calls upon all Afghan parties to halt all illegal drug activities and to support international efforts to ban illicit drug production and trafficking. Drug trafficking from Afghanistan, which is associated with arms trafficking and other criminal activities, presents a substantial threat to the countries of the region.

We are deeply concerned that Afghan territory, particularly that under Taliban control, continues to be used to shelter and train terrorists. This draft resolution therefore strongly demands that all Afghan parties, and in particular the Taliban, take effective measures to ensure that the territory under its control is not used for terrorist bases and camps, and take the necessary steps to support efforts to bring indicted terrorists to justice without delay. Terrorists from Afghanistan can easily reach every country of the globe. This represents a serious threat to international peace and security. The bombings of the United States embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in August 1998 demonstrated that countries far away from the region have fallen victim to terrorist acts organized and planned in Afghanistan. In this context I would like to recall Security Council resolution 1267 (1999) of 15 October 1999. We urge the Taliban to comply with this resolution without further delay and to turn over Usama bin Laden in line with the resolution.

We hope that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus. It is our deepest conviction that a durable settlement of the Afghan conflict can be achieved only through a ceasefire and a political dialogue. With this draft resolution we wish to send a strong message to the Afghan parties and to the countries with influence in Afghanistan — a message saying that the international community wants the Afghan parties to stop fighting, and a message to the States with influence in Afghanistan to use their influence constructively in coordination with the United Nations, which we unanimously and strongly support.

Let me conclude by expressing our gratitude to the Secretary-General, to the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan and, especially, to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, for their tireless efforts to promote the peace process in Afghanistan. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all United Nations staff members who have been or still are working in Afghanistan for their excellent work under extreme and often discouraging conditions.

Ms. Korpi (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries, Cyprus and Malta, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area, Iceland and Liechtenstein, align themselves with this statement.

For too many years the conflict in Afghanistan has caused enormous suffering for the Afghan people, who continue to bear the consequences of the civil war. The civilian population longs for peace, justice and order. Furthermore, the chronic fighting threatens the stability of the region and its economic development, causing repercussions far beyond Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries.

The European Union is deeply concerned about the sharp escalation of the military confrontation during the past months. We are dismayed that the Taliban ignored the call in the Tashkent Declaration for the Afghan conflict to be settled through peaceful political negotiation, and instead launched a major offensive. The European Union is particularly concerned about the suffering the fighting has caused to the civilian population and about the deteriorating humanitarian situation of the increasing number of internally displaced persons.

The European Union is profoundly disturbed by the reports of forced deportation of civilians by the Taliban from their places of residence. We urge the Taliban to end this practice immediately and allow those forcibly deported to return. We are equally concerned about the reports of forcible separation of men from their families and other forms of harassment, and about the widespread destruction of homes and agricultural land and crops by the Taliban.

The European Union reiterates its position, as expressed in its common position of 25 January 1999, that there is no military solution to this conflict and that only a political settlement, aimed at the establishment of a fully representative, broad-based Government, can lead to peace and reconciliation. We therefore appeal to all

factions to agree on an immediate ceasefire and enter negotiations under United Nations auspices.

The European Union reaffirms its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan. We are deeply disturbed by the reports of the growing presence, mainly on the side of the Taliban, of thousands of non-Afghan nationals, who mostly emanate from religious schools in Pakistan. The European Union strongly condemns all foreign interference in Afghanistan and urges that the supply to the warring factions of weapons, munitions and other material for military use, as well as the involvement of foreign military, paramilitary and secret service personnel, immediately stop. In this context, we wish to recall that the European Union continues to enforce the embargo on the export of arms, munitions, and military equipment provided for in its common position on Afghanistan of 17 December 1996, and we urge other countries to adopt a similar policy of restraint.

Moreover, we encourage all countries in the region to support the United Nations in promoting peace in Afghanistan and to use any influence they have in a positive way to convince the Afghan parties to cooperate with the United Nations. We regret that the "six plus two" group has not been able to find a unified approach vis-à-vis the warring parties, and we urge the group to redouble its efforts in this regard.

No society can achieve an acceptable degree of peace, justice and stability without full respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The European Union is deeply disturbed by reports of the killing and harassment of innocent civilians and persistent human rights violations, as well as breaches of humanitarian law in Afghanistan. We are gravely concerned by reports of persecutions based on ethnic origin or religion, which demonstrate the increasingly ethnic nature of the conflict. The European Union is also concerned over reports of the involvement of children in the conflict, and we urge the warring factions to take immediate steps to end this practice.

The European Union calls on all Afghan factions, and in particular the Taliban, to recognize, protect and promote all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to life, liberty and security of person, and to fully respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments to which Afghanistan has subscribed.

The European Union denounces the continuing gender discrimination in Afghanistan. We urge the Afghan factions, and in particular the Taliban, to end discriminatory policies and to recognize, protect and promote the equal rights of women and men, including access to education and health facilities, employment, personal security and freedom from intimidation and harassment. The European Union will continue to take into account discriminatory policies when considering future decisions regarding the supply of aid and support to aid programmes in Afghanistan aimed at integrating gender concerns and actively attempt to promote the equitable participation of both men and women.

The European Union therefore strongly supports the Secretary General's proposal to establish a Civil Affairs Unit within the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA), the primary objectives of which would be to promote respect for minimum humanitarian standards and to deter massive and systematic violations of human rights in the future. We are looking forward to the rapid deployment of this Unit.

For years, the European Union has been the largest donor of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. The European Commission had to suspend funding for projects in Kabul in July 1998 because it had become increasingly difficult for agencies to deliver humanitarian aid in an efficient, effective and principled manner, especially in the health and education sectors. Subsequently, the European Commission had to scale down humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan for security reasons. Nevertheless, humanitarian activities were later resumed at the beginning of 1999, and we wish to continue helping the Afghan people. We would recall, however, that aid can continue only where it can be delivered in an effective manner, without discrimination, and where humanitarian organizations are able to carry out their work freely and safely. The absence of national reconciliation has a negative impact on donors engaged.

The European Union remains deeply concerned about the continuous restrictions imposed on the activities of United Nations and other humanitarian personnel.

In this context, the European Union calls on the Taliban to fully implement the agreements signed with the United Nations on the safety and security of United Nations personnel. We urge the warring factions to ensure the freedom of movement of national and international humanitarian personnel and their free and safe access to all those in need, without restrictions based

on gender, race, religion or nationality, and to cooperate fully and sincerely with humanitarian organizations. In this regard, we condemn in the strongest terms the recent attacks against United Nations personnel and property following the imposition of sanctions against the Taliban by the Security Council.

The European Union strongly supports efforts to improve the effectiveness of aid through close coordination and complementarity between the United Nations peace efforts and the aid effort, as envisaged in the Strategic Framework common to the international donor community and United Nations organizations. Furthermore, the European Union reiterates its call for the Taliban to proceed with the immediate and thorough investigation of the murders of the United Nations staff members as well as the killing of Iranian diplomats during the Taliban attack against Mazar-i-Sharif in August 1998.

The European Union attaches high importance to the fight against illegal drugs and terrorism. Therefore, we are deeply concerned at the significant rise of the production and trafficking of drugs in Afghanistan this year, which further threatens regional stability and damages the health and well-being of the populations of Afghanistan, neighbouring States and elsewhere. We therefore call for a coordinated international response to the Afghan drug threat. In this regard, we recognize the role of the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention in the fight against drugs.

Furthermore, the European Union urges all Afghan parties to refrain from financing or providing training or shelter for terrorist organizations or otherwise supporting terrorist activities. We reiterate our call upon all Afghan factions, and in particular the Taliban, to close down training camps for foreign terrorists inside Afghanistan, and to take the necessary steps to ensure that those responsible for terrorist acts are brought to justice. In this regard, the European Union urges the Taliban to comply with Security Council resolution 1267 (1999) without further delay and to turn over Osama bin Laden in line with that resolution. The European Union and its member States are, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1267 (1999), imposing targeted sanctions against the Taliban.

The European Union is determined to play an effective role in efforts to stop the fighting and to restore peace, stability and respect for international law, including human rights, in Afghanistan. We are committed to making every effort to bring about a sustainable peace in Afghanistan, to put an end to foreign intervention, an encourage intra-Afghan dialogue, in particular thro support for the central role of the United Nations. will also continue to give our full support to Un Nations efforts in promoting peace and security Afghanistan. In this regard, we would like to express support for the Secretary-General's intention strengthen the United Nations Special Mission Afghanistan (UNSMA) with a view to assuring primary role in conducting United Nations peacema activities in Afghanistan.

The European Union encourages in particular joint initiative organized by the Council for Peace National Unity in Afghanistan to convene a Loya Jirg We welcome the Rome meeting of November 1 because it was clearly based on the principle Afghanistan's future must be decided by Afgh themselves.

Finally, we would like to express our apprecia for the efforts made by UNSMA and by the Spe Envoy of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan. We with concern that the lack of progress so far in negotiations with the parties to the conflict has led to freezing of the activities of the Special Envoy, and hope that increased readiness by the parties to the con to cooperate with the Special Envoy will enable him resume his activities.

Mr. Ortique (United States of America): United States is pleased to be sponsoring draft resolu A/54/L.58, which highlights the internatio community's commitment to addressing the devasta effects of 20 years of civil war in Afghanistan and mistaken policies of authorities there. My cou continues to be concerned about the serious humanita crisis in northern Afghanistan. Up to 65,000 pers displaced by the Taliban in fighting just this summer currently taking refuge in the opposition-contro Panjshir valley. As winter sets in, they face seri shortages of food and shelter. Thousands of others h fled to Kabul and need support there. We welcome Taliban's cooperation in allowing a United Nati humanitarian aid convoy to cross front lines into Panjshir valley, and we urge them to continue to ens that food assistance reaches the neediest in Afghanist

Persistent violations of human rights, especi those of women and girls, remain a primary concern the United States. We were appalled by reports of gross and systematic abuse of civilians during fighting

the Shomali plains in July, including separation of men from their families, summary executions and burning of homes, fields and orchards. On the other hand, we applaud the establishment of a Civil Affairs Unit within the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA) to promote respect for human rights, and we look for the deployment of the first group of civil affairs officers as soon as conditions allow.

We are alarmed that Afghanistan this year became the world's largest producer of illicit opium. The Secretary-General has reported that the number of hectares under opium poppy production is 43 per cent higher this year, and that opium poppy production has spread to 104 districts in Afghanistan, 31 more than last year. This is in direct conflict with the pledge made by the Taliban to the Executive Director of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme that they would support the elimination of all opium poppy. My country declares that all Afghan parties must halt illegal drug activities and cooperate with international efforts to stop the production and trafficking of illegal drugs everywhere.

The Taliban's continued harbouring of international terrorists in Afghanistan is of urgent concern to all nations. Bin Laden and his network continue to threaten not only the safety of Americans all over the world, but also other citizens in countless countries who may become victims of his terrorist policies.

Security Council resolution 1267 (1999) was an important step in combating international terrorism. The international community has sent a clear message to the Taliban that they must turn over Bin Laden to a country where he will be brought to justice. We have been gratified to hear from many Member States that they have taken action to implement sanctions against the Taliban. We urge all Member States to implement sanctions rapidly and fully and to assist the Security Council sanctions Committee by providing information on Taliban assets and aircraft in their countries.

I want to underscore that these sanctions are targeted against the Taliban. They have been carefully designed to minimize the impact on the people of Afghanistan and to allow humanitarian assistance to continue unimpeded. Neither the United States nor the international community has abandoned the Afghan people. The Afghan Support Group met this week in Ottawa to better coordinate international assistance. The United States continues to be the single largest donor to humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan, giving approximately $70 million in the last fiscal year, and has pledged over $0.5 million in response to the recent food crisis in Afghanistan.

But this has been a discouraging year for those who seek peace in Afghanistan: the Taliban launched a major military offensive; intra-Afghan talks under United Nations auspices have been suspended; the "six plus two" process has been of limited utility; foreign military support to Afghan parties continues; security concerns have kept most United Nations international staff out of Afghanistan; and Special Envoy Brahimi has frozen his activities.

One of the few rays of light has been the initiative of the former King of Afghanistan, Zahir Shah, to bring together a wide spectrum of Afghans to discuss a peaceful resolution of the conflict. A cross-section of Afghans met in Rome, from 22 to 25 November, to discuss plans for convening an emergency *Loya Jirgah*, which would provide the means for the Afghan people themselves to shape their future without outside interference. The United States encourages all Afghan parties to continue exploring avenues to a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

As winter sets in, the military situation in Afghanistan is largely in stalemate. Neither side appears strong enough to defeat the other. The chronic fighting promises only to produce more human suffering, more human rights violations, more illegal drug activity and more support for terrorism. My country urges the warring parties to set down their weapons and set the stage for Afghans throughout the world to negotiate an end to a conflict that has gone on far too long. If the Afghans will it, it can and will be done.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): Let me begin by expressing my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for preparing the reports on agenda items 20 (f) and 50. I would also like to thank most heartily the delegation of Germany for coordinating the important draft resolution before us. The draft resolution covers, in a comprehensive manner, issues related to Afghanistan in the areas of peace, security and humanitarian assistance, and it enjoys my Government's full support. We hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

Japan shares the deep concern expressed by the international community in the past months over recent developments in Afghanistan, where factional fighting has intensified and many people have been forcibly displaced from their homes. The suffering of the civilian population

is increasing, and neighbouring countries are concerned about the influx of refugees. An additional source of great concern to us is the reported doubling of the opium poppy production in Afghanistan in the past year.

Japan supports the valuable efforts being made by the Secretary-General, his Special Envoy, Ambassador Brahimi, and the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan to restore peace to that war-ravaged country. We equally value the activities of the United Nations humanitarian organizations in Afghanistan. We recognize that they are working under extremely difficult conditions, but we encourage them to continue their crucial endeavours. Japan also appreciates the efforts made by the "six plus two" group, composed of the six States bordering Afghanistan as well as the Russian Federation and the United States of America, and hopes that their work, together with the additional efforts of other Member States, will complement the work of the United Nations and hasten a settlement of the conflict. Japan calls upon the parties to the conflict, especially the Taliban, to comply with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council so that a durable peace may finally be achieved in Afghanistan. We wish to reaffirm our belief that the conflict in Afghanistan can be settled only through peaceful negotiations with the objective of establishing a broad-based, multi-ethnic and representative government.

Today I would like to highlight four elements that are essential for the achievement of a peaceful settlement of this prolonged conflict.

First, the Taliban and the other Afghan factions should immediately cease fighting and resume their dialogue. A durable peace can be achieved only through peaceful means, and we support all efforts towards that end. In this context, I wish to reiterate my Government's offer to host a meeting at which all Afghan factions can engage in dialogue in neutral surroundings, with the aim of finding a way to achieve national reconciliation.

Secondly, the countries concerned, and neighbouring countries in particular, should not interfere in the conflict, but rather should use their influence on the warring factions to bring the fighting to an end. It is especially important that all concerned stop extending military assistance or supplying arms to the warring factions and that they refrain from any other measures that could prolong the hostilities.

Thirdly, in view of the tremendous human suffering of the Afghan people, the international community should continue to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. The Afghanistan Support Group, whose sixth meeting was held in Canada this week, is performing a crucial service by exploring ways to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of such assistance. Japan, for its part, has provided humanitarian assistance through United Nations agencies and programmes, amounting to $400 million over the past 10 years.

Fourthly, the international community should convey to the Afghan factions, their leaders and the people a clear message that it will extend assistance to their national reconstruction efforts once the fighting ceases and peace is restored and a broad-based, multi-ethnic and representative government is formed. The establishment of such a government is indispensable for the provision of reconstruction assistance by the international community. We hope that such a strong international commitment will encourage the warring factions to come to the negotiating table and settle the dispute peacefully. Japan, for its part, renews its own commitment and readiness to contribute to the reconstruction of Afghanistan once peace has been restored.

The path to peace in Afghanistan is a long and arduous one. I believe, however, that the international community must persist in its efforts to convince the conflicting parties that the achievement of durable peace will be to their benefit. Japan will continue to play an active role in this endeavour.

Mr. Vural (Turkey): There is no doubt, and the Secretary-General's report clearly testifies to this fact, that the political and humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan continues to be one of the most preoccupying and pressing problems of the international community. In Turkey, we have deep-rooted historical and cultural ties with the Afghan people. Our only desire is to see the emergence of a stable, peaceful and prosperous nation. This summer the level of fighting reached an unprecedented level when the Taliban forces launched their large-scale military offensive. This military campaign brought new problems to the already grave humanitarian and human rights situation on the ground. We are deeply concerned by the human rights violations, the discrimination against girls and women and acts of religious extremism, especially in areas under the control of the Taliban.

The by-products of the Afghan crisis — such as refugees, illicit cultivation and trafficking of narcotic

drugs, and shelter for international terrorism — have taken on transborder dimensions with international implications. In Afghanistan, drugs, terror and arms are creating a vicious cycle, destructive for all. The United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention advocates a coordinated international response to the threats emanating from Afghanistan. We share this view.

The ethnic and religious nature of the conflict has entailed gross human rights violations, murders and the displacement of populations in northern Afghanistan. In this respect, specific cases, such as the tragic murder of United Nations personnel and of the Iranian diplomats, remain to be thoroughly investigated by the Taliban. The increased humanitarian needs arising from the intensification of the conflict in Afghanistan have confirmed the importance of the humanitarian operations of the United Nations agencies and its partners. However, the security problems of and the constraints on the access of United Nations humanitarian assistance are adding to the suffering of the people.

Turkey appointed a coordinator for Afghanistan at the ambassadorial level in September 1998, with the objective of establishing contacts with the parties in Afghanistan and with the interested States and of contributing to finding a solution to the Afghan problem through peaceful means. Our first-hand observations confirm the obvious: there can be no military solution to the Afghan crisis. The only viable solution to the problem remains the establishment of a broad-based, multi-ethnic government in which all the parties are represented. The parties can benefit from traditional methods, such as a *Loya Jirgah* or from modern concepts that would lead to the establishment of a new representative body acceptable to the people of Afghanistan. However, such a reconciliation process cannot resume unless a ceasefire is declared and a true dialogue begins among the parties. This stands as a primary task.

The preservation of the territorial integrity and independence of Afghanistan is of utmost importance. Collective diplomatic efforts, with the United Nations playing the central role, continue to be the only efficient instrument that might lead the Afghan parties to a dialogue. The activities of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, are commendable and should be accorded the solid backing of the international community. The Organization of the Islamic Conference should also maintain its useful cooperation with the United Nations regarding Afghanistan.

Turkey is currently working on launching a humanitarian aid programme which will directly target the Afghan people as a whole. We are giving priority to the neediest, among them the disabled, infants and widows. We believe that the humanitarian aid schemes targeting Afghanistan should be broad-based, covering all segments of Afghan society. Turkey is also considering contributing to the United Nations humanitarian aid programme for Afghanistan.

We believe that the Afghan people look forward to rebuilding their unity and harmony. The tormenting experience they have gone through only vindicates their aspiration for national reconciliation. Turkey, as always, is ready to contribute to such an outcome. It is with this purpose that we support and co-sponsor the draft resolution before the General Assembly. I would like to thank the Government and the delegation of Germany for coordinating the preparation of this excellent draft resolution. We hope that its adoption by consensus will constitute a further step in the right direction.

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): I wish to begin by expressing my thanks to the Secretary-General for the complete report that we have received from him on the situation in Afghanistan. I should also like to thank him for the regular reports we received every three months throughout last year on the same issue. These reports reflect the sustained and dedicated efforts of the Secretary-General himself, as well as of his Special Envoy, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, and his colleagues in the Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA), to bring about a political settlement to the crisis in Afghanistan.

Mr. Stanislaus (Grenada), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Since last year's debate in the General Assembly on Afghanistan, the situation in that war-stricken country has, unfortunately, further deteriorated and the humanitarian situation worsened. Blatantly disregarding the international community's efforts for a peaceful settlement of the conflict and the desire of the Afghan people to reach national reconciliation, the Taliban made another futile attempt last summer to solve the problem by armed force. The counter-offensive launched one week later by the United Front resulted in its recapturing virtually all the lost ground, demonstrating once again that military action is not a solution.

Although the fighting made no overall difference to the military balance between the two warring sides, it added to the misery of the civilian population. Credible and continuing reports from Afghanistan indicated that the Taliban adopted what amounted to a scorched-earth policy in those areas where their offensive took place. There are reliable reports that the Taliban have intentionally burned houses and villages and systematically destroyed the agricultural base in the Shomali plains in order to dissuade the displaced inhabitants from going back.

The Secretary-General, in his report contained in document A/54/378, points out that

> "The Taliban's conduct of forced displacement of the civilian population during their recent offensive in the Shomali plains is a particularly alarming signal which reflects the movement's apparent disregard for the concerns expressed by the international community." (*A/54/378, para. 39*)

The Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, in his briefing to the Security Council on 27 August 1999, provided the Council with detailed accounts of what he referred to as a "scorched-earth policy" conducted by the Taliban in the same area.

The acts committed by the Taliban in the Shomali plains appear to follow the same pattern as the massacre of thousands of innocent people in the wake of the Taliban capture of Mazar-i-Sharif in August 1998 and the systematic ethnic cleansing in Bamian in April and May this year, which were meant to change the demographic map of Afghanistan. We are deeply concerned by the ethnic nature of the conflict and by reports of persecution on the grounds of ethnic origin and religious persuasion. We regret that the conditions for investigation of the massacres committed previously by the Taliban were not met and that the preventive effect of such an investigation was thwarted. We also regret that Afghan women and girls continue to be denied access to health care, education and employment in all areas under the control of the Taliban.

While the situation in Afghanistan remains tragic, its wider repercussions are becoming ever more dangerous. The region and the wider world continue to be affected by the instability spreading from the lawlessness and chaos associated with this conflict and the wide-ranging threats arising from it: drug trafficking, refugee crisis and terrorism.

A chaotic situation, on the one hand, and the ill advised policy pursued by the Taliban, on the other, hav allowed Afghanistan to become by far the world's large producer of opium, with, as the Secretary-General put i 75 per cent of the world's opium production. Moreove the statistics provided by the United Nations Internation Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) show that the illic production of opium in Afghanistan roughly doubled 1998 and 1999 to a record 4,600 metric tonnes.

It is self-evident that the rising trend in dru trafficking originating from the territory held by t Taliban is indeed a devastating and threatening glob menace which affects all human societies. It is not on inflicting national human and financial damage, but prone to cause inter-State tension, which may lead regional and international instability.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, sharing a long bord with Afghanistan, is currently engaged in a costly w against heavily armed drug traffickers on its easte borders. Since the beginning of the current year, 1 Iranian anti-drug personnel have lost their lives confrontation with armed smugglers, raising the to number of forces killed in this field to 2,852 since 198 This year, a total of 170 metric tonnes of narcotics ha been seized. The Islamic Republic of Iran has allocat billions of dollars to anti-drug projects in the past tw decades, with the estimated cost of next year's campai alone surpassing $1 billion.

We are of the view that the question of dr trafficking remains the common responsibility of nations, especially those that have the greatest capabilit to confront this issue. Our efforts in this regard cou succeed if coupled with the meaningful support a practical cooperation of the international community. W strongly believe that the United Nations system, as w as Member States, should play a more active part providing meaningful political, material and financ assistance to countries neighbouring Afghanistan in orc to strengthen their border security. I cannot fail express appreciation for the practical initiatives wh have been taken by UNDCP in providing assistance strengthen the national basis for combating illicit drugs our region.

My country has had to carry a disproportion burden of the decades-long struggle in Afghanistan. W continue to host significant numbers of Afghan refuge Unfortunately, the periodic resumption of the fighting northern and central Afghanistan and the lack of will

work towards peace not only have created new internal displacements and fresh refugee flows to our country, but also undermine seriously the efforts towards voluntary repatriation of the Afghan refugees.

Despite the fact that nearly 2 million Afghan refugees living in Iran continue to place unduly heavy burdens on our country's limited resources, the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to abide by its international commitments in this respect. Likewise, owing to the international scope and nature of refugee crises, recognized by the relevant convention, we hope that other Member States will also confirm their commitments to the relevant convention by trying more effectively to put an end to the Afghan crisis and assisting more seriously those refugees living in Iran and those willing to return to Afghanistan.

Furthermore, lawlessness in Afghanistan continues to provide favourable conditions for terrorist bases and training camps. This situation obviously has negative implications for peace and security in the region and far beyond. While condemning the Taliban leadership for harbouring and maintaining terrorist camps in the Afghan territory under their control, we believe that terrorism is only one of the many side effects of the lingering conflict in Afghanistan, and that it cannot be addressed effectively and adequately unless the international community takes resolute action to stop the fighting in Afghanistan.

Adding to the destabilizing effects of the situation are disturbing reports about thousands of non-Afghan nationals taking part in the fighting on the side of the Taliban. If this trend is not reversed, the nature of the senseless war in Afghanistan may increasingly evolve towards an even more widespread and destructive regional conflict. Therefore, we call upon all concerned to adopt strict measures aimed at preventing their nationals from joining the Afghan parties.

We deeply regret that the summer military offensive by the Taliban took place in the wake of the high-level meeting of the "six plus two" group in Tashkent, held last July. At the same time, we take note of the continued readiness of the United Front to engage in a peace process with the Taliban, as noted by the Secretary-General in his two previous reports, and we regret that the Taliban continue to reject such a constructive approach.

The international character of and the apparent lack of solution for the situation in Afghanistan call for a reinforced effort of the United Nations and its Member States. We appeal to them to continue their efforts in order to bring an early end to the fighting and to promote the negotiating process in Afghanistan. Despite its shortcomings, the "six plus two" group remains a useful forum and mechanism in the peace process and should therefore be supported by the international community. We hope that the failure of the latest offensive by the Taliban to achieve its key objective will finally persuade them and their supporters that further fighting is futile and will encourage them to support peace initiatives.

We believe it is timely to recall that all of the resolutions of the Security Council on Afghanistan have been adopted unanimously, and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly have gained increasing support from Member States with each passing year. At the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, nearly one third of the delegations sponsored the resolution on Afghanistan. It is even more encouraging to see that the number of sponsors of the current draft resolution has so far grown to nearly half of the general United Nations membership. Such strong support for the General Assembly draft resolution would indicate with great seriousness that ignoring the decisions of the United Nations and openly defying the international community cannot be continued with impunity.

The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to believe that because of the historical realities and the traditional and multi-ethnic structure of Afghanistan, only a genuinely broad-based, multi-ethnic and fully representative government which protects the rights of all Afghan people, with no distinction, can bring peace and normalcy to Afghanistan.

The issue of the tragic murder of the staff of the Consulate-General of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamic Republic News Agency's correspondent in Mazar-e-Sharif by the Taliban forces in August 1998 is still pending and remains unresolved. The Taliban, as the international community, including the Council itself, is fully aware, continue to stubbornly disregard the rules of international law and have yet to implement Security Council resolution 1214 (1998), which condemned this crime and in paragraph 5 called upon "the Taliban to cooperate with the United Nations in investigating these crimes with a view to prosecuting those responsible". I would like to emphasize that the Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to vigorously pursue the matter to a conclusion by which justice is served. We remain hopeful that the United Nations will continue its valuable efforts in this regard.

In closing, I would like to recall that the resumed fighting has led to large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons. There are very few facilities available to these people. The situation in the Panjshir Valley, a remote and inaccessible area with insufficient means of subsistence, is especially alarming. Emergency humanitarian relief assistance, particularly food, clothing, medicine and shelter, is in great demand in that area and in many other parts of Afghanistan. We commend the Secretary-General for the coordination of all international efforts to deliver emergency assistance to Afghan people who need it and call upon the international community to spare no efforts in assisting those in need in Afghanistan.

In the light of the foregoing, my delegation has co-sponsored draft resolution A/54/L.58. I wish to place on record our appreciation to the delegation of Germany for the broad and lengthy consultations and coordination it carried out on this draft resolution.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): I would like to begin by paying a special tribute to the Secretary-General for his efforts to find a peaceful solution to the armed conflict in Afghanistan, and to his Special Envoy, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, for his tireless work over the last two years.

Norway has for many years been involved in Afghanistan through our support for various United Nations agencies and through a number of Norwegian and international non-governmental organizations. Norway chaired the second meeting of the Afghanistan donor group in New York in December 1997. Our support for the people of Afghanistan is based on a strong commitment to a negotiated solution to the armed conflict.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security. Though we are deeply saddened by the lack of progress achieved so far, we recognize that, because of its increasing regional and international implications, it is necessary to keep the Afghan conflict high on the international agenda.

As the Secretary-General rightly points out in his report, the military conflict in Afghanistan is the root cause of a wide range of problems, including illegal drug trafficking, human rights abuses, religious extremism, terrorism and a lack of social and economic development. In addition to the disastrous consequences in terms of loss of human life and civilian suffering, the escalation of the military conflict last summer has further aggravated all these problems. Norway is greatly disturbed by the failure of the Afghan parties, in particular the Taliban, to recognize this, and by their lack of willingness to resume negotiations.

It is crucial to find a peaceful solution to the military conflict in Afghanistan. We welcome the peace initiatives taken by non-belligerent Afghan groups, such as the *Loya Jirgah* convened by the former King of Afghanistan in Rome in November.

Norway welcomes the Tashkent Declaration on Fundamental Principles for a Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict in Afghanistan. We regret that the situation has deteriorated since the meeting of the "six plus two" group in Tashkent last summer. We call upon the Afghan parties to implement the many constructive recommendations set out in the Declaration. We also call on the members of the "six plus two" group to adhere to their agreement not to provide military support to any Afghan party and to prevent their respective territories from being used for this purpose.

Once again, we would like to stress the regional dimension of the Afghan conflict. Drug trafficking and other illegal activities are impeding economic development in the whole region. As the world's largest producer of illicit opium, Afghanistan is a threat to stability and prosperity in its neighbouring countries as well. Norway is deeply worried by the reported rapid growth in drug abuse in the region. The social and economic cost of illegal drug trafficking adds to the destructive effects of the military conflict.

We appeal to all countries in the region to join in a common effort to put an end to the illegal traffic of drugs and arms, which is helping prolong the military conflict in Afghanistan. A political settlement of the Afghan conflict would make an important contribution to peace and stability in the whole region.

Norway strongly condemns the violations of human rights that are taking place in Afghanistan, including those inflicted on ethnic minorities, women and girls. We urge the warring factions to respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Norway is particularly alarmed by the violation of women's and children's rights. Education for all, including for girls and women, is the best possible investment in a country's future. We call upon the parties, in particular the Taliban, to promote free access to education, employment and health care for all citizens. Norway strongly denounces the recruitment of child soldiers, and we urge the parties to

respect the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the tenth anniversary of which we celebrated last month.

Norway is alarmed by the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, especially for the large number of internally displaced people. It is crucial to bring an end to the fighting and to ensure safe access for humanitarian organizations. We call for a rapid return of the refugees, and we urge the parties to the conflict to allow relief agencies to provide assistance effectively and efficiently to all victims.

Through the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan, the United Nations has taken into account the interaction between political, humanitarian, human rights and other factors. Norway strongly supports this effort to give humanitarian assistance a place in the political process for peace and reconciliation.

Finally, we reaffirm our commitment to the re-establishment of peace in Afghanistan, and we give our full support to the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan in its efforts to bring about a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

Mr. Granovsky (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Last year's events do not inspire us with hope for an early end to the armed conflict in Afghanistan and for the beginning of serious political dialogue among the major warring Afghan parties. There were certain expectations in connection with the activities of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Afghanistan, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, and also in connection with contacts between the Afghan sides in Ashgabat and Tashkent.

The adoption of the Tashkent Declaration on Fundamental Principles for Peaceful Settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan by the neighbours and friends of Afghanistan, the "six plus two" group was an important step forward. The States that signed this document urgently called upon the warring parties to renew their peaceful political negotiations with a view to establishing a broadly representative Government for Afghanistan; they expressed their readiness to promote such negotiations under the aegis of the United Nations and to make commitments not to provide military support to any Afghan party whatsoever.

However, only a few days later, the Taliban launched a new offensive. This led to the renewal of large-scale hostilities in Afghanistan and to yet another breakdown in international peace efforts. Hostilities continue to escalate in Afghanistan, because of the Taliban leadership, which embarked upon its policy of force to impose a solution to the Afghan problems. Of special concern is the fact that thousands of non-Afghan students, as well as hundreds of mercenaries and fighters from other countries, continue fighting on the Taliban's side.

We must put an end to the increasing outside interference in intra-Afghan affairs. Neighbours of Afghanistan must strictly comply with the relevant principles set forth in the Tashkent Declaration.

It is no secret that the Taliban-controlled territory in Afghanistan is being used to support international terrorism and extremism of all stripes and to encourage unlawful production of and trafficking in drugs. As a result of the Taliban's activities, Afghanistan has acquired a solid reputation as one of the world's hotbeds of terrorism and drugs, the negative effects of which are already being felt directly far beyond the limits of that country, including in some regions of Russia and the States of Central Asia. All of this directly affects the interests of our security, and we, along with our partners in the Commonwealth of Independent States will continue to take all necessary steps in this connection.

Russia supported Security Council resolution 1267 (1999), which strongly condemned the Taliban for sponsoring international terrorism and demanded that it hand over Usama bin Laden, the international terrorist. In the light of reports of bin Laden's support for terrorist groups on Russian territory, compliance with this resolution takes on special significance for us.

We call upon the international community to lend active support to the activities of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, designed to strengthen the opportunities for States neighbouring Afghanistan to halt the transport or flows of drugs.

In their resolutions, the Security Council and the General Assembly condemned the activities of the Taliban and put forward clear requirements regarding the principles for an Afghan settlement. The main requirement is the holding, under the auspices of the United Nations, of intra-Afghan negotiations designed to establish a broadly representative and multi-ethnic government that would ensure respect for the rights of all Afghans and fulfil Afghanistan's obligation, in accordance with international law, to comply with human rights law and international humanitarian law.

We would like to emphasize that talk of some kind of international recognition of the administration of the Taliban is in direct contradiction of these United Nations demands. The new spiral of fierce armed resistance begun by the Taliban has led to a worsening of the suffering of the Afghan population and to new flagrant violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law.

We demand that the Taliban movement immediately put an end to such practices, ensure the safety of international humanitarian personnel and fulfil other appropriate conditions for the lending of urgent humanitarian assistance by the international community to all of those who are in need of it, without any type of discrimination.

The United Nations, playing the central role in coordinating international efforts in Afghan matters, must take active steps to end the bloodshed and bring the parties to a peaceful settlement. We support the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, in fulfilment of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

We believe that the members of the "six plus two" group should take practical steps to carry out their obligations and thereby promote the establishment of favourable conditions to break the deadlock in the Afghan crisis. We welcome the latest meeting, which was concluded yesterday in Ottawa, of the Afghanistan Support Group, in which representatives of donor States, including Russia, and a number of international and non-governmental organizations participated. We hope that the results of that meeting will help enhance the effectiveness of international humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan.

Russia is prepared to continue constructive cooperation with all interested parties to find a settlement to the conflict in Afghanistan on the basis of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The humanitarian and political situation in Afghanistan continues to be a major source of concern for the international community. Continued fighting between the warring parties has become an unbearable burden for the Afghan people. There is therefore an ever-increasing need for the international community to pay more attention to the daily problems faced by the Afghan people, who aspire only to the bare essentials of life and security.

In this context, I would like to commend the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA) and the specialized agencies for their efforts aimed at alleviating the pain and suffering of the Afghan people. We appeal to all Afghan parties to cooperate with the Mission and to facilitate the work of the specialized agencies and others in providing assistance to the Afghan people.

There is no doubt that the continued fighting has exacerbated and complicated the problem of refugees and internally displaced persons. Furthermore, the warring parties' disregard for international norms and laws in dealing with unarmed civilian inhabitants has contributed to an exacerbation of the situation. This has resulted in waves of migration, sometimes voluntary and sometimes forced. People are migrating from their places of origin, thus complicating and worsening the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. We therefore believe that there is an urgent need to find a prompt solution to the refugee problem in order to enable the refugees to return voluntarily to their homelands and to provide them with the necessary living conditions.

Egypt would like to express its concern over the content of the report of the Secretary-General with regard to the possibility of an acute food shortage in Afghanistan next year. We urge the parties to the conflict that are taking intransigent positions as regards establishing a dialogue with the other parties to realize the gravity of the catastrophe facing the Afghan people and to demonstrate a sense of responsibility towards their people by overcoming their narrow interests and by taking immediate steps towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict in good faith and honesty.

Policies that breed terrorism and that support and encourage the production of drugs to finance the war machine have also become a major concern for the international community. There is no doubt that Security Council resolution 1267 (1999) and the presidential statement issued by the Council on 22 October 1999 constituted two very clear messages to the party in power: that it should realize the gravity of the situation and take into consideration the international community's great concern.

The Islamic world began the holy month of Ramadan yesterday, a month that calls for tolerance and the resolution of conflicts. I would like to take this opportunity to launch an appeal to the party that is contributing to the deterioration of the situation to cling

to the genuine pillars of Islam, a religion that calls for equality among people — both men and women — and for putting an end to bloodshed and living in social interdependence. We urge all intransigent parties to refrain from any practices that fail to do justice to this holy religion, which has always called for peace and dialogue.

Mr. Haque (Pakistan): Twenty years ago, in the month of December, Afghanistan was invaded by the forces of the former Soviet Union. Since that fateful day, Afghanistan and its suffering people have continued to be traumatized by war and conflict. The year 1989 was a watershed year in Afghanistan's history. Soviet forces withdrew and left behind a totally ravaged country. With the departure of foreign forces from their country, the Afghan people expected peace and the reconstruction of their shattered infrastructure, economy and lives. At a time when the Afghan need for external help and assistance in the rebuilding of the country was the greatest, the international community quickly disengaged itself. It ignored the people who had made great sacrifices to preserve their independence and sovereignty and who were just emerging from the ashes of a fierce, decade-long battle against foreign occupation. The conflict that rages in Afghanistan today is in large measure a direct consequence of that neglect, which continues to this day. As the Secretary-General has noted in his report, the response of the international community to the 1999 consolidated appeal for assistance to Afghanistan has been disappointing.

The effects of the two decades of conflict in Afghanistan have been truly devastating. Death and destruction have visited almost every Afghan household. Millions continue to live as refugees in foreign lands. The Afghan economy is in shambles, cities and towns have been reduced to rubble, the countryside has been ravaged, and institutional and State structures have been destroyed.

Tragically for the people of Afghanistan, the period covered in the report of the Secretary-General has not been much different from yesteryear's. Some brief flickers of hope were kindled, but were quickly stamped out by violent spells of internecine strife.

The two rounds of intra-Afghan talks in Ashkabad, held in February and April this year, enabled the two main parties to reach a framework agreement. However, unfortunately, the hopes generated by this process were soon dashed by mutual accusations and recriminations between the two warring sides, and the agreement fell by the wayside.

On 19 and 20 July, the "six plus two" group met in Tashkent. It was the first time that the group also met the two Afghan sides. The meeting adopted the Tashkent Declaration on Fundamental Principles for a Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict in Afghanistan.

The Declaration envisaged a two-stage process for the peaceful settlement of the conflict. In the immediate term, the Afghan parties were to be encouraged to adopt measures for building mutual confidence, including a ceasefire and direct negotiations on the exchange of prisoners of war and the lifting of internal blockades to promote reciprocal trade and the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The second stage called for the Afghans to draw up basic principles for the future States structures in Afghanistan and the establishment of a broad-based, multi-ethnic and fully representative Government.

The members of the "six plus two" collectively undertook not to provide military support to any Afghan party and to prevent the use of their territories for such purposes. A similar call was issued to the international community, including the adoption of measures to prevent the delivery of weapons to Afghanistan. Unfortunately, almost immediately after the Tashkent meeting, the deeply entrenched mutual suspicions between the two main Afghan parties led to a new round of hostilities, which began with rocket attacks on 27 July on Kabul by the United Front and a ground offensive by the Taliban forces the next day.

In response to an appeal by Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, Pakistan undertook the initiative to facilitate reconciliation between the two Afghan parties. As a facilitator, Pakistan merely undertook to faithfully convey the views of the two sides to each other. A number of meetings were held with both sides, but the initiative did not succeed because of the contradictions in the private views and public pronouncements of the representatives of the United Front as well as their excessive demands, which were not acceptable to the Taliban.

The latest round of hostilities now appears to have run out of steam. It is our sincere hope that during the intervening period between now and next spring, the two sides will realize the futility of conflict and the wisdom of rebuilding an Afghanistan at peace with itself.

We believe that an end to outside interference in Afghanistan would help to promote the prospects of peace and an intra-Afghan dialogue. Pakistan has proposed on a number of occasions the imposition of an arms embargo

applicable to the whole of Afghanistan. An embargo on military supplies would greatly reduce the ability of the Afghan factions to continue to wage their self-destructive war. We will continue to work for this objective.

However, we believe that the arms embargo must also be accompanied by a comprehensive international programme for the reconstruction of Afghanistan and the rehabilitation of the Afghan refugees. The economic reconstruction of Afghanistan would strengthen and reinforce the impulses for peace and stability in that country.

The continuation of war in Afghanistan has direct and dire consequences for Pakistan, since our countries share a border that extends over 2,500 kilometres. Pakistan cannot isolate itself from the fallout of the conflict in Afghanistan. The influx of millions of Afghan refugees to Pakistan has imposed heavy social and economic costs on Pakistan. While the overall size of the Afghan refugee population in Pakistan has ebbed and flowed, approximately 1.8 million refugees remain in Pakistan even today. They represent the largest concentration of refugees in any part of the world.

Pakistan has no option but to deal as best it can with the ground realities in Afghanistan, particularly the fact that the Taliban government controls 90 per cent of the territory, including the capital, Kabul. Our problems as a neighbour of Afghanistan are different from the ones of those who find it easy to prescribe panaceas, offer advice or make demands from afar.

No country in the world stands to gain more than Pakistan from the return of peace and stability to Afghanistan. Accordingly, our policy towards Afghanistan is predicated on a desire to promote a peaceful solution to the Afghan conflict.

We have fully supported the efforts of the United Nations as well as the initiatives of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in the shared belief that there can only be a negotiated solution to Afghanistan. We are convinced also that only an intra-Afghan consensus can ensure durable peace in Afghanistan. There can be no solution imposed from outside. That is an immutable lesson of Afghan history.

The key to peace in Afghanistan lies in the engagement of both Afghan parties and not in the isolation of one or the other. The international community must remain neutral between the parties for it to remain a credible interlocutor. To demonize one side would be counterproductive. It is through impartiality that the international community can hope to bring durable peace to Afghanistan. It is not possible, nor would it be fair, to single out any one Afghan party and hold it responsible for the cumulative ills of the last 20 years in Afghanistan.

It must not be forgotten that in the intervening period between the end of foreign occupation of Afghanistan and the advent of the Taliban movement, the very factions that now form the United Front were at war among themselves as well as against other Afghan groups. The Taliban emerged only a few years back, as a reaction to the excesses of the Afghan warlords. As such, the blame for the disaster in Afghanistan cannot be laid at the door of the Taliban, to the exclusion of those who preceded them.

Pakistan believes that the "six plus two" group can, and must, play its role in finding a durable solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. We do not share the doubts expressed by some about the effectiveness of that group. The Tashkent Declaration was a clear manifestation of the agreement of the group on the steps to be taken for the return of peace to Afghanistan. Furthermore, while we appreciate the decision of the Secretary-General to strengthen and upgrade the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, we regret that the work of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General has been frozen, at his own request. We believe that the United Nations, the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy must continue their efforts to promote peace in Afghanistan. The international community must remain engaged and utilize to the maximum the window of opportunity presented by the onset of winter for the promotion of negotiations between the warring parties.

I would now briefly like to comment on the draft resolution contained in document A/54/L.58, which was presented to the General Assembly earlier this afternoon. We proposed a number of constructive amendments to inject some balance into the text. A few of our proposals were accepted; most were not. In our view, the draft resolution, as submitted, remains one-sided and biased. Pakistan does not condone excesses by any party to the conflict in Afghanistan. However, we note that the draft resolution holds the Taliban primarily responsible for most, if not all aspects of the Afghan situation. It ignores some constructive steps on the part of the Taliban, whether they relate to the destruction of heroin laboratories, to the successful crop substitution efforts under the pilot programme of the United Nations

International Drug Control Programme or to improvements, howsoever limited, in education and health care for women and girls. It does not acknowledge that large areas under the control of the Taliban are relatively stable and secure, which could encourage the voluntary return of refugees, provided international assistance is forthcoming.

We also note that the Secretary-General has announced his intention to progressively move the head office of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan to Kabul. Obviously, such a decision is predicated on improved and more secure conditions in areas controlled by the Taliban Government. The draft resolution also eschews any criticism of the United Front, whether in relation to external military support, human rights excesses, violations of international humanitarian law, drug trafficking, the use of anti-personnel landmines or other issues. Above all, the draft resolution sends out the wrong message to the two main Afghan parties currently locked in battle.

The one-sided nature of the text would strengthen the belief among the Taliban that they are discriminated against unfairly by the United Nations. It would also encourage the United Front to raise its expectations and demands, secure in the belief that it enjoys the support of powerful countries. This would militate against and complicate the prospects of negotiations for peace between the Afghan parties. Due to these serious shortcomings, Pakistan has decided to dissociate itself from the draft resolution in document A/54/L.58, being considered by the General Assembly.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me at the outset to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his annual report on the situation in Afghanistan, in which he sheds light on the events that have taken place in Afghanistan over the past year in the military, political and humanitarian spheres, and also sets out his views of further ways and means of considering and resolving the Afghan problem. We believe that the report as a whole served as a good basis for drawing up the draft resolution submitted for our consideration today.

It is clear that the many years of conflict in Afghanistan have been a source of pain not only to the Afghan people, but also to the peoples of Central and South Asia, as well as to the rest of the international community. The long-lasting civil war and the continued instability have long since crossed the border of Afghanistan and spread their negative effects far beyond the region. The international community cannot fail to express its concern over what is taking place today in that long-suffering country and its vicinity.

The terrible consequences of the civil war in Afghanistan include constant violations of human rights and freedoms, the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of peaceful inhabitants, the dangerous spread of the trade in drugs and arms, the growing threat of international terrorism, regional extremism and the radicalization of the peaceful, humanistic and lofty character of one of the world's major religions, Islam. These phenomena are taking on increasingly negative forms, and the victims are the completely innocent inhabitants of the States Members of the United Nations.

The item under consideration in the General Assembly today has been on its agenda for almost 20 years, since 1980. Once again, the international community must express its concern about the fate of that country, and all its peoples and ethnic groups, and about the fact that war and conflict have deprived its people of their homeland, doomed it to destruction and deprivation, reversed its economic development and lowered standards of living for decades to come. For Uzbekistan, which has a common border with Afghanistan, this issue is of special concern and very timely. The re-establishment in Central Asia of new, independent States with significant human and natural resources has resulted in the creation of a new geopolitical region that, with further consistent progress, might be transformed into one of the dynamically developing markets of the world in the twenty-first century. However, the success of such an important development will depend to a significant extent on ensuring a peaceful settlement of the Afghan conflict and establishing lasting peace, security and stability throughout the region.

The rapid achievement of a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan, to which there can be no alternative, would give a powerful impetus to the establishment of conditions necessary for ensuring mutually advantageous regional cooperation among all the countries of the region. Uzbekistan therefore believes that is extremely important for Afghanistan to become a peaceful, stable and secure State with a strong, authoritative, multi-ethnic, broad-based and representative government that is capable of achieving national consensus and ensuring internal stability, respect for the norms of international law and good-neighbourly relations with neighbouring countries.

In recent years, the Republic of Uzbekistan has consistently made efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Afghan problem with the specific intention of strengthening regional stability and security. Such aspirations determined the constructive approach taken by my country, within the framework of the "six plus two" group, in carrying out under the auspices of the United Nations its activities to seek ways and means of finding a political settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan.

I should like to note that, despite some recent criticism of a lack of success in the activities of the "six plus two" group, the group has in a relatively short time gained experience, in cooperation with other interested countries, in seeking ways to break the deadlock in the Afghan crisis. Since its inception the group has shown itself to be an effective international mechanism with enormous potential for achieving a peaceful solution to the Afghan problem. In our view, this potential was visible also in the high-level meeting of the "six plus two" group held on 19 and 20 July 1999 at Tashkent, with the participation of the Afghan sides, and in the adoption of the Tashkent Declaration on Fundamental Principles for a Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict in Afghanistan. Judging from the reaction of the international community, that Declaration and the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions are viewed as the principal international documents relating to a peaceful long-term settlement of the Afghan conflict.

To achieve effective results, the members of the group must display the necessary political will in fulfilling their commitments under the Tashkent Declaration, as repeatedly urged by the international community at large. Here, it is important too that the Afghan parties should heed the views of the international community and take a genuinely positive and constructive approach to a peaceful settlement of the Afghan conflict. Settlement of the Afghan conflict is a matter first and foremost for the Afghans themselves. All parties to the Afghan conflict, including the forces backing them, must realize that, even more than in the past, there can be no military solution now or in the future.

In our view, the only way out of the situation is to bring about an immediate end to hostilities, a ceasefire, and a resumption of dialogue among the Afghan sides with a view to beginning a negotiating process, under United Nations auspices, intended to achieve lasting peace and stability.

Uzbekistan is convinced that the United Nations, as a generally acknowledged neutral mediator, must continue to play a central role in all international efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement of the Afghan conflict. In that connection, we welcome and support the efforts made by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and by the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan. We place high value too on the endeavours of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, who in recent years has devoted himself to active peace negotiations with a view to achieving a peaceful settlement of the Afghan problem. We firmly call upon the Afghan parties to cooperate constructively and positively with the Special Envoy's peacemaking efforts; that would enable him to fulfil his mandate more effectively.

The most important elements of Uzbekistan's foreign policy relating to the peaceful settlement of the Afghan conflict are the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan and the maintenance of its sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and national unity. While Uzbekistan's policy upholds the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, we intend vigorously to support United Nations initiatives to break the deadlock in the Afghan problem, to cooperate actively with all interested parties in bringing peace to that country, and to support contacts with the Afghan parties to the conflict.

We are gravely concerned also about other aspects of the inter-Afghan crisis. The use of Afghan territory for training international terrorists and extremists and for conducting planning and training for terrorist acts has a highly destabilizing effect throughout the region, and particularly in Central Asia. In that connection, we sharply condemn all activities of terrorist and extremist groups in Afghanistan aimed against the interests of States Members of the United Nations and of their citizens. We welcome and support all General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on this matter. In that connection, Uzbekistan fully supports Security Council resolution 1267 (1999) of 15 October 1999.

Nor can we fail to be gravely concerned also about the establishment on Afghan territory of major drug production centres. These harmful substances are increasingly spreading to neighbouring countries and to other regions and subject their vulnerable societies to the most nefarious influences. According to the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, illegal production of opium in Afghanistan doubled between 1998 and 1999, to 4,600 metric tonnes. The illegal drug trade, which is usually coupled with arms

trafficking and other criminal activities, poses a serious threat to the entire region. We are concerned about this and call upon the Afghan parties to put an immediate end to all unlawful activities in this sphere; we support the efforts of the international community and of international organizations, in particular the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, to put an end to the illegal production of narcotic drugs in Afghanistan.

It would be in everyone's interest to enter the twenty-first century having done away with the blights on our planet, first and foremost the armed conflicts that daily cost many thousands of innocent lives. On the threshold of the new millennium, we must face an urgent challenge, to which the world community has been giving its most focused attention: to make effective progress in the peace process in Afghanistan and to put an early end to the many years of destructive war there. Uzbekistan intends to play a most active role in international efforts to that end.

Based on that position of principle Uzbekistan has joined in sponsoring the draft resolution before the Assembly today.

Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan): In discussing the draft resolution now before us, my delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report of 16 November 1999 on the situation in Afghanistan (A/54/536). The report for the first time takes a new approach to determining, *inter alia*, the extent of foreign military involvement in Afghanistan, particularly in comparison with previous reports, and it explicitly asserts the existence of foreign military units. The amply documented facts contained in the report enable the international community to cross-check the realities about the now-revealed agenda of both Pakistan and its mercenaries, the Taliban, in Afghanistan and in the region.

By the same token, the report highlights important facts relating to the existence of international terrorist networks operating from the region and beyond in collaboration with the Taliban militia, the colossal increase in opium production in the Taliban-held areas of Afghanistan and, finally, the persistent threat to international peace and security posed by the talibanization of the region. In addition, the report amply reflects the Taliban's gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. In addition, the report amply reflects the Taliban's gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Before addressing certain specific aspects of this report, I feel obliged to remind this Assembly of the Islamic State of Afghanistan's continued projection of the far-reaching ominous repercussions emanating from Talibanism, since as early as 1995. There were early warnings of the imminent threat of Talibanism, including its profound links to the extremist and terrorist networks of the region and beyond, its close collaboration with the politico-military drug mafia of Pakistan and its politico-ideological agenda in South and Central Asia, all of which constitute a major threat to the peace and stability of the region and the world.

Regrettably, despite these early warnings, the initial rise of the Taliban was galvanized by short-sighted views coming from certain countries in the region and beyond. These countries aimed at capitalizing on the Taliban for their own strategic and mercantilistic interests, without an in-depth analysis of crucial realities such as the geopolitical situation of Afghanistan, the significance of its not being allied with any regional country, its desire not to be subservient to any country, the ethnic composition of its people and their resolve not to succumb to any foreign domination.

Allow me to highlight by category certain main points of the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan (A/54/536).

First, on foreign intervention and the existence of foreign military units in Afghanistan: references to the existence of non-Afghan combatants arriving from Pakistan are made in paragraphs 5, 33, 35 and 75 of the report. Paragraph 75 in addition confirms the involvement of Pakistani fighters in the combat against the armed forces of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, reading:

> "Equally alarming and unacceptable is the growing presence of thousands of foreign 'volunteers', mainly on the side of the Taliban. Those non-Afghan fighters, some still children under the age of 14, come mostly from religious schools in Pakistan. Reports indicate that there are also independent units of Arab and other non-Afghan fighters who are fighting along with the Taliban troops, but under separate commands. It is deeply disturbing that an increasing number of non-Afghan fighters are taking part in the actual combat, as well as the planning and logistical support of military offensives."

While we thank the Secretary-General for having rightly included in his report the crucial factor of the existence of Pakistani and other foreign fighters in Afghanistan, the Islamic State of Afghanistan expects the Security Council to identify the Pakistani aggression in Afghanistan and to call upon that country to withdraw its so-called volunteers and its military personnel from Afghanistan, as it did earlier this year from Kargil, in the interest of peace and stability in the region.

On the unilateral withdrawal of the Taliban militia from the United Nations-sponsored Ashgabat peace talks, their total disregard of the Tashkent "six plus two" meeting and the summer Pakistani-Taliban offensive, paragraphs 10 to 17 of the report of the Secretary-General refer to the three rounds of intra-Afghan talks brought about through the discreet efforts of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan and certain neighbouring countries during the year. Two successive rounds of these talks took place in Ashgabat, 10-11 February and 11-14 March 1999. However, on 10 April, the Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, issued a statement calling for a unilateral suspension of the talks by the Taliban. Subsequent diplomatic efforts to bring the Taliban back to the negotiating table proved futile.

On 19 July of this year, at the invitation of the Government of Uzbekistan, member States of the "six plus two" group met in Tashkent and adopted the Declaration on Fundamental Principles for a Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict in Afghanistan, known as the Tashkent Declaration. The Declaration made strong appeals to both sides to refrain from initiating any major new military offensives, as simultaneously called for by Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Afghanistan.

The appeals met with belligerent contempt from the Taliban troops, who, accompanied by armed Pakistani and Arab fighters, soon thereafter launched a major military offensive north of Kabul. Putting this major offensive in perspective, paragraph 4 of the Secretary-General's report reads,

> "The level of fighting reached an unprecedented scale for 1999 when the Taliban launched a major ground and air offensive against UF on 28 July. The offensive, which Taliban leaders called a decisive battle to defeat UF, not only shattered the hopes for peace raised at the Tashkent meeting of the 'Six plus Two' group, but also added further problems to the already grave humanitarian and human rights situations on the ground."

Significant, however, is the fact that the relen last-ditch attempt by the Secretary-General's Spe Envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, aimed at averting this m offensive through the influence that Pakistan maintain the mercenary group, as referred to in paragraph 3 the report, yielded no tangible results.

Remaining incontrovertibly convinced of the mas and direct involvement of Pakistan in the fighting, an the evolution of the military events throughout the have grown more and more revealing to the internati community, the Islamic State of Afghanistan sees the offensive as a Pakistani offensive against the sovereig independence and territorial integrity of Afghanistan

Pakistan's acts of aggression in Afghanistan req clear and resolute action by the United Nations. Islamic State of Afghanistan is of the conviction mere rhetoric and adopting policies of appeasem towards the aggressor will do nothing but fur embolden the aggressor. It is, we believe, high time the United Nations to take strong measures against aggressor in the case of Afghanistan, thereby uphol the sacred purpose of the maintenance of internati peace and security and sparing the lives of inno people who are victims of years of foreign intervent

As regards the grave breaches of internati humanitarian law and human rights by the Taliban: w today marks the fifty-first anniversary of the Unive Declaration of Human Rights, and we are on the verg the twenty-first century and of the next millennium, dismaying to see the Taliban championing the caus human rights violations and of breaches of internati humanitarian law.

Paragraphs 58 to 62 of the report explain Taliban's massive and gross human rights violati which have continued unabated throughout the year. report reflects the widespread suffering and the m miseries the people of Afghanistan have continued t subjected to by the Taliban militia during this past y whose acts have included deliberate targeting of civil and non-combatants, summary execution of women children, forced displacement of civilians, arbit detention, the separation of families and women f their menfolk, the abduction of children and women, looting and burning of their houses and the system destruction of their entire agricultural infrastructure.

In this regard, the Pakistani daily, *The Frontier Post*, on 6 December — just four days ago — published an article by a Pakistani commentator in which he said,

> "They [the Taliban] could not establish well-recognized norms of governance which should have been acceptable ... within or outside Afghanistan. Their mode of governance has practically disabled the Afghans to shape their own future and pushed Afghanistan [into] the backyard of the underdeveloped world ... Summary executions, separation of men from families, arbitrary detentions, abduction and disappearance of women, burning and destruction of homes and property, including chopping of trees, are reported to be common."

The Frontier Post continues,

> "Such lawlessness can only destabilize a society to a state of [no] return. Such [a] state of affairs demands that human rights issues of the people of Afghanistan should be addressed on [a] priority basis by the international community. A meaningful advance can be made only if a government representing all ethnic groups is established as a first step."

The commentator, Mr. M. S. Qazi, then writes that vis-à-vis the Taliban, "a review of Pakistan's foreign policy objectives is essential".

The conditions described above by the Secretary-General and the Pakistani commentator draw a picture of the realities in the Taliban-held Afghan areas. Unfortunately, despite these realities many Pakistani statesmen and officials flaunt the grandeur of their relations with the Taliban, claiming that the Taliban have restored peace and normalcy in many parts of Afghanistan. The reality in the Taliban-held Afghan areas is that there has been a de facto military occupation by Pakistan, by which more than half of the nation has been placed under virtual house arrest, gender apartheid instituted in the form of the most misogynistic regime, all international laws and norms continuously breached, terrorism publicly sponsored, other countries threatened and the largest quantity of illicit opium in the world produced.

There is also a flip side to the Pakistani interpretation of the realities in the Taliban-held Afghan areas. In fact, in virtually all Taliban-held territories of Afghanistan there are varying degrees of resistance against the Taliban and their Pakistani mentor. Naturally, the resistance is aimed at breaking their firm military grip.

While we are thankful to the Secretary-General for his tragic picture of the atrocities — all of which were committed against civilians by the Taliban — the Islamic State of Afghanistan further expects the Secretary-General to invite the Security Council to pay due attention to this alarming situation and to the significant suffering of the Afghan people. Given the situation, there is a dire need to take the necessary measures against the perpetrators. Failure to act vigorously against such crimes, we believe, would undoubtedly lead to a sense of unaccountability and impunity for those involved in the heinous crimes enumerated by the Secretary-General.

Regarding the massive production of narcotics by the Taliban militia, the world's largest illicit supplier of opium, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme testified earlier this year that more than 96 per cent of Afghan opium — a quantity estimated at 4,600 metric tons and with an end value of $100 billion — comes from areas under the control of the Taliban.

My delegation spoke last year from this very rostrum about the evil triangle that is haunting our region. The evil triangle we seek to reveal is between, first, the politico-military mafia of Pakistan; secondly, branches of international terrorism and drug traffickers operating from the region; and thirdly, the notorious Taliban militia.

Combating such a transnational organized crime network, which finances the hegemonic purposes of Pakistan and the Taliban's war machine, in addition to associated terrorist groups, demands firm and robust action by the international community and the countries of the region. Mere reports that only establish facts without making an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon and recommendations for a concerted strategy to combat the problem are not enough to advance the struggle against illicit drug trafficking.

As regards the Security Council's sanctions against the Taliban, one of the major political developments within the framework of the United Nations is resolution 1267 (1999), unanimously adopted on 15 October 1999. As is explained by the Secretary-General in paragraph 22 of his report, the Security Council resolution imposing sanctions on the Taliban was to become effective unless the Taliban turned over Mr. bin Laden within 30 days from the date of the resolution's adoption. Given the lack of resolve by the Taliban to comply with the demand, the sanctions came into effect on 14 November 1999.

In this context, we have welcomed the clause on humanitarian exceptions, which would ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people who are innocent, irrespective of their geographical location. The main objective of the sanctions is to curtail the financial resources of the Taliban and their money-laundering operations, which come mainly from the proceeds of drug trafficking and donations from their rich and wrong-headed overseas sympathizers.

However, ample amounts of commentary and criticism from different Afghan circles, expressing their disappointment over the formulation and limited nature of the resolution, which is understood to be mainly focused on the extradition of only one individual, continue to raise many questions. They clearly construe this resolution to indicate that all breaches of the peace and violations of international law as enshrined in the Charter, including interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign State and the perpetration of heinous crimes by non-Afghan combatants, including Pakistani military personnel and armed "volunteers", as well as the Taliban militia, shall go unpunished. They interpret the Security Council resolution, in fact, as giving them a green light to engage in a scorched-earth policy, to openly pursue the looting and torching of houses, and to commit crimes against humanity, war crimes and violations of international humanitarian law. Many eyebrows have been raised about the resolution and questions raised about the strange attitude of indifference towards the Pakistani aggression, the continued crimes of armed Pakistani and Taliban men and the double standard of the Security Council towards the principles of equality of States and the disposition of the United Nations Charter, set forth in its Preamble as the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.

Yet, in order to protect life, liberty and security and to end the significant suffering of any human person threatened by aggression and terrorism — whether living inside or outside Taliban-held territories — it is necessary that the scope of the sanctions imposed under the resolution not be limited solely to extraditing Bin Laden from Afghanistan.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan has always supported the efforts of Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Afghanistan, as well as of the United Nations Special Mission in Afghanistan in their dedicated and tireless endeavours to bring a lasting peace to Afghanistan. We are thankful to the Secretary-General for acknowledging and welcoming the willingness of the Islamic State of Afghanistan to talk with the Taliban in order to reach a solution to the Afghanistan problem.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan — mindful of the principle of the peaceful settlement of conflicts — earnestly desires a broad-based, fully representative and multi-ethnic Government in Afghanistan. The Islamic State of Afghanistan, struggling for sovereignty and the return of peace and normalcy through the institution of such a Government, highly aspires to the settlement of fundamental issues, such as the restoration and full observance of human rights in Afghanistan, particularly women's and girls' human rights. The Islamic State of Afghanistan is of the firm conviction that the reconstruction and cultural and economic development of Afghanistan can never be totally or effectively possible if Afghan women are deprived of their God-given rights to public education and to work.

The people of the Islamic State of Afghanistan genuinely aspire to an early return of peace and normalcy, hoping Afghanistan will be not merely a neighbour of, but also a potential friend to all neighbouring and regional countries, including Pakistan. Afghanistan would extend full trade cooperation, such as the facilitation of north-south and east-west transit routes, to the benefit of all countries of the region and beyond. The Islamic State of Afghanistan is striving for the restoration of friendly relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan based on the equality of sovereign States and contingent on the continuity of mutual respect.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan, by co-sponsoring the draft resolution before us, once again reaffirms its position that there is no military solution to the current conflict in Afghanistan.

I would like to conclude by expressing my delegation's sincere gratitude and thanks to the German delegation and Ambassador Kastrup for their untiring and strenuous efforts in coordinating the work on the draft resolution on Afghanistan. I would like also to extend my appreciation to all the numerous delegations that have sponsored the draft resolution. We rest assured that, as is its established practice, the General Assembly will adopt the draft resolution, which is sponsored by more than 80 countries, without a vote.

I wish to say one last word. In his statement, the representative of Pakistan spoke just now of Pakistan's peacemaking efforts and good offices among the Taliban parties. In reality, all Pakistan's efforts, which it claims

to be the work of facilitation, are focused on confusing world public opinion about its military involvement in Afghanistan. This is now a well-known fact, widely reported by the Secretary-General in his recent report on the situation in Afghanistan. The only service that can be provided by Pakistan in the interests of peace and stability in the region is to withdraw its military personnel and so-called "volunteers" from Afghanistan. All armed Pakistanis have to leave Afghanistan. Pakistan is directly involved in the Afghanistan conflict and cannot be a peace-broker in Afghanistan.

The main purpose of the Pakistani emissary's visit to the North to make diplomatic contact was to urge the Islamic State of Afghanistan to accept the so-called "emirate" of the Taliban and thus to surrender to the Taliban. This absurd demand was, of course, categorically rejected. Pakistan is earnestly asked to evacuate the armed Pakistanis from Afghanistan. This would be a service that Pakistan could render to the peace process in Afghanistan.

The Acting President: I should like to inform members that, in order to allow time for the review of the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/54/L.58, action on the draft resolution will be taken at a later date to be announced.

The meeting rose at 7.25 p.m.